

MAN AND
HIS IMMORTAL SOUL

A COURSE OF
SEVEN LENTEN SERMONS

BY A PRIEST
OF THE
DIOCESE OF NOTTINGHAM

NEW YORK
JOSEPH F. WAGNER



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MAN AND HIS IMMORTAL SOUL.

A Course of Seven Lenten Sermons.

I.—THE VALUE OF OUR IMMORTAL SOULS.

“For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?”—Matt. xvi. 26.

SYNOPSIS.—Introduction.—The mercies of Lent; how to go through it.

I. The pursuit of earthly things brings eternal loss. 1. The nature and difference of the things of the earth, and the things that are above. 2. On which should our hearts be fixed? 3. The enjoyment of earthly things is unsatisfactory. 4. Is of short duration. 5. They can not redeem a lost soul. 6. They lead to the pain of loss in hell.

II. The pursuit of heavenly things brings eternal gain. 1. The peace of a good conscience here. 2. The bliss of heaven hereafter. 3. The reward of the body in heaven. 4. The joys of heaven are eternal. St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier.

Conclusion.—Study Christ's words; meditate on them.

Of all the mercies, brethren, which God bestows upon man, there is one especially great which we do not value as we ought, and that is the holy season of Lent. A short meditation on the majesty of God and the insignificance of man will show us how wonderful it is that God should deign to forgive us after we have once offended Him. But this surprise is much increased when we consider how, in His holy Church, He has instituted and set apart a special time in each year as a time of special graces and forgiveness, a time of spirituality and prayer; a time when He sends out His ministers into the high-ways and by-ways to seek sinners, to find the poor, wounded, straying sheep, and to bring them back to His loving arms, to be soothed, tended, and caressed upon His loving bosom. Truly, Lent and the graces it brings with it are priceless. But what return do we make to God, how do we go through this holy time? Many pass through it with a grumbling spirit, others do so in a routine way, and many derive no lasting, no permanent benefit from it. All

this must be changed; for, unless we spend this holy season well, it will but add to our condemnation, since we shall be punished for neglecting and despising God's mercies. We must, then, seize upon this wonderful favor of our Father's love with zeal and earnestness, and make it a time not only of obtaining pardon for our past offences, but also a time when we shall do our very utmost to obtain lasting and permanent results from it, so that it may mean for us an entire, radical change of life, the putting away of all sin, and the cultivating of a life of virtue and holiness. Be careful, then, to keep the fasts of the Church. Pray much; and to have time for this, stop all gossiping. Give alms to the starving poor; prepare for a worthy reception of the Holy Sacraments. And, last but not least, hear all the sermons you possibly can, since they are the messages He sends you, His loving appeals to your own individual hearts. Be careful not to miss even one, for the sermons are linked together, and if one is left out the chain is broken and is not so beneficial as it might be.

There is nothing more appropriate, brethren, with which to open this holy season than the subject suggested by our Lord's words: "For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?" (Matt. xvi. 26). Christ is about to speak of the general judgment, when "the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Verse 27), when He will reward the good with the glory and happiness of heaven, but the wicked He will cast into hell. The subject, then, contained in Christ's words is the value of the things of this world compared to the value of our immortal souls, or what will it profit us to gain the former and lose the latter. We shall know the answer to our Lord's question on the day of Judgment, but since it will be too late then, let us study the matter now whilst we are on earth and have yet time to prepare for that awful moment.

I. 1. There are two kinds of objects on which man may fix his affections whilst on earth, and Holy Writ terms them "the things of the world" (I. John ii. 15), and "the things that are above" (Col. iii. 2); or, "the lusts of the flesh," and the desires of "the spirit" (Gal. v. 16, 17); as the gratifications of the fleshy, sensual part of man, and as the delights of his spiritual part, that is his soul.

These two sorts of objects are opposed to each other; they do not

exist together; they are entirely different; and the more we pursue the one the further we are from the other. Neither can we love both at once, for if we "hold to the one we will despise the other" (cf. Luke xvi. 13). Hence come all our struggles in this life, "for the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, for these are contrary one to another" (Gal. v. 17), and both are strong and are striving for the mastery over us. But we are admonished by St. John not to give our hearts to the world: "Love not the world nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him" (I. John ii. 15). But if we look about us, and note with what care, zeal, and prudence the generality of men labor for the things of the world, and the slothful and fitful manner in which they attend to "the things that are above" to the welfare of their souls, we have a clear proof that the number of those who love the things of the earth far exceeds those who love the things of heaven. We do not here mean to say that men are not allowed to give reasonable attention and care to the management of their temporal concerns, but they must not set their hearts and affections on these things and make them their whole study and aim in life.

2. Now our Lord speaks to men who have reason, and who are fully capable of knowing good from evil, and who, on account of their free will, have the power to regulate their conduct. He asks them to decide whether this preference for the things of earth be wise or foolish. If the pursuit of earthly things be more profitable than attending to the welfare of our souls; if they are really worth sacrificing our spiritual and eternal interests for, then let us follow in the footsteps of the vast majority, and seek to live in luxury, ease, and sensual pleasures. But, on the other hand, even if we could become absolute masters of the whole world with all its riches, power, and pleasures, reason tells us that this is no solid profit at all, when weighed in the balance with the loss of our soul and eternal life; and if that same reason informs us that all the kingdoms of the world with their greatness could not redeem or purchase back our soul once it was lost, then, what sane man or woman can hesitate for a moment in deciding which of the two objects would be preferred, or on which our affections should be fixed.

3. The world of which our Saviour speaks is the world we live in and which men admire and seek and desire to possess. What does this world contain? What are its leading features? The apostle

says: "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world;" and he adds a short list of what the world contains and which things he cautions us to avoid: "For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world" (I. John ii. 15, 16). The "concupiscence of the flesh" are those carnal pleasures which our flesh, our bodies delight in. The "concupiscence of the eyes" are riches, wealth, and the like, apart from sensual pleasure, which pleasing the eyes make a man long for them, though he is "never satisfied with them" (Eccles. iv. 8). Finally, "pride of life" is that imaginary grandeur and honor of life, which fills men with such pride and self-conceit, and makes them hard, cruel, and unjust to others. These are the things which engage the attention of worldly minded people, the things which they prefer to the welfare of their souls. Now let us suppose a man to be occupied in the pursuit of one or all these three objects, suppose him to have become master and owner of all, and to have his desires gratified, to have even the whole world in his grasp; yet how unsatisfactory is the enjoyment of all this. Where, indeed, can we find such a man who is ever satisfied? He that loves money will not be satisfied with it (Eccles. v. 10, 11); he is always wanting more. With what labor and anxiety does he guard what he possesses, and no matter how much he has gained he yearns, he craves for more. The sensual man who revels in carnal pleasures knows well the fearful punishment that awaits him, and the thought of these punishments stings his heart and destroys his pleasures, even in the moment that he is enjoying them. And the man who seeks position and power, even when he has risen to the highest pinnacle of fame, is jealous of the power that others wield, and is continually in fear that others will become greater than he is and undermine his greatness. So there is none of these things which has not some mixture of pain or anxiety in it. And no matter how much a man has of these things, whether it be pleasure, or wealth, or power, he still craves for, he still yearns for more; for it is impossible that the world or all it contains should fill our hearts, should limit our desires, for the desires of the human heart are equal to its capacity, and it is ever capable in this world of yearning for new and changing delights as long as life lasts. Hence the things of the world do not give any real true pleasure, for they either bring with them fear of punishment, stings of conscience, or great anxiety and labor in keeping, or a longing and a terrible

craving for more. They, indeed, are not at all satisfactory, and are, therefore, even in themselves, not profitable.

4. But even were the enjoyment of these things far more satisfactory, still they only continue for a short time, and often during life they take wings to themselves and fly away (Prov. xxiii. 5). The man who is most wealthy to-day may through an accident be a beggar to-morrow. The man whose fame has made him the idol of the people in this hour, does that which will make his flatterers hate and detest him in the next. So it is with sensual pleasures—their duration is short and fleeting. But even if a man retains these things through life, still at the end of life all enjoyment of them ceases; man can not take them with him. "As he came forth naked from his mother's womb, so shall he return, and shall take nothing with him" (Eccles. v. 14). And what is life, what duration has it? Look back over the past ten, twenty, or thirty years, how short they seem; they appear to be a past dream. Life is like the cloud that swiftly passes overhead and is lost in the horizon, like a vapor that appears and in a moment is gone. And take from this life, the years of infancy and the years of decrepitude and dotage, when men can not truly enjoy the things of the world, and the worldling's life of pleasure and enjoyment is shorter still. Ah, does not our own experience teach us that the pleasures and enjoyments of the past were very short lived and were not indeed worth the trouble and expense we were put to in gaining them? Quickly we shall think the same of those we enjoy now, and shall bewail our folly at having spent our time and stained our conscience in acquiring them. Does not this consideration prove to us that the worldling who has labored so hard for the things of the earth, for riches, honors, pleasures, has gained nothing, has profited nothing, but has in reality lost all so far as the world is concerned, and will most likely lose his soul in the next world?

5. But mark well, that in our Lord's words, there is not merely a question as to the value of pleasure whilst on earth, nor yet a question between the comparative value of the pleasures of the world and the delights of heaven, but it is a question between the gaining of the whole world with the loss of the soul and, therefore, the loss also of the eternal bliss of heaven. Nay, fearful as this is, the question of losing the bliss of heaven means positive suffering and eternal damnation of the worldling in hell. To be deprived of the happiness of heaven is fearful enough, but to be sent to hell is still more ter-

rible. Yet this is very clear from our Saviour's words. "What," he said, "doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" Immediately Christ adds: "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he will reward every man according to his works" (Matt. xvi. 26, 27). So our Lord's question may be put thus: "What will it profit a man if he has gained the whole world, and on account of this I find he is guilty of many crimes at the moment of judgment and I send him to hell?" "What exchange shall he give for his soul?" But if a man has gained the whole world, can not he purchase his soul back again with this? The things of the world are no longer his; he lost them at death. But with whom could he bargain? Would it be with God? Ah, but the world is God's already. Would he bargain with the devil? No; for it was the devil who pretended to give him the world for his soul. No; the soul can never be redeemed with gold, silver, power, or greatness, but with "the Precious Blood of Christ" (I. Peter i. 19). During life a mortal sinner may receive back the life of his soul in the confessional, but when it has left this world and been condemned in the next, it can never again be redeemed; it is lost for ever; out of hell there is no redemption. We can sacrifice our souls to gain the things of the world, but we can not give them in exchange for our souls, for this is not in our power. There is no profit, no gain, then, in striving after the things of the world, since they give no real pleasure, and must be left behind at death, and the gaining of them brings upon us an irreparable loss, which nothing can compensate, nothing can repair, and that is the loss of our souls and eternal life.

6. But to see this more clearly still, follow the lost soul down into hell, and see what its most terrible pain is there. That pain is the pain of loss. What grief and anguish it now feels at the loss of heaven. How it longs for, how it yearns for its God, its Maker, for the bliss and happiness that it should have enjoyed were it saved. It may yearn, it may crave, but it can never enter heaven. This loss means to it an infinite and universal loss, a state that includes everything that is evil, and excludes everything that is good. It is a loss which deprives the soul of everything she desires, and forces upon her everything she fears and abhors.

And the next great pain of the poor lost soul is this, that it is lost for a trifle, for a mere bauble. On earth it sought the things that gave it power and pleasure; it gained few of them; it enjoyed them

for a little while; the end came—it had to leave them, and on their account it has been condemned. So it has not gained anything, but has absolutely and entirely lost everything—lost heaven, lost an eternity of bliss, yea, and even the very things of the earth for which it has been condemned. Instead of sensual pleasures, it suffers most fearful torments; instead of having fame and nobility, it is now scorned and loathed as a damned soul; instead of being great and powerful, it is the sport, the plaything of the very demons. Truly, indeed, it has gained nothing, but lost all.

II. 1. Let us now turn to the other side of the picture and follow those who wisely pursue the things of the spirit, the “things of the Father” (I. John ii. 16). True it is, that in doing so they have to struggle with many temptations, but what of that? We have the word of God to prove that the bearing of these short trials earns for us an exceeding weight of eternal glory (II. Cor. iv. 16-18). And has not the worldling trouble and pain in acquiring power and riches? Does he not even when enjoying them fear the punishments that are to follow? Beyond all doubt, his conscience is uneasy, and it makes life a torture to him. But on the contrary, when we strive to be good, strive to lead a holy life, how happy we are when we can retire to rest, and laying our hands on our hearts, feel that we have done our best for God during the day, and are prepared to meet Him should He call us during the night. Life on earth holds nothing half so glorious, nothing so great or so well worth having as the peace of a good conscience.

2. But when life is over and our Maker calls us to the glory and happiness of heaven, then we shall be more than fully rewarded for our little trials and labors. The happiness of heaven may be divided into essential and accidental glory. The former is for the soul; the latter for the body. It is certain that our souls as spiritual substances can not be happy unless in the possession of some spiritual good, nor supremely happy but in the possession of the most perfect spiritual good, and that is God Himself. Yet in heaven we shall see Him clearly, “see him face to face” (I. Cor. xiii. 12), shall live in His presence. He is our heavenly Father, and His great desire will be to shower down His love upon us, and His power which enables Him to do so, and His will which will prompt Him to do so, are alike infinite. Ah, the transcendent delights of heaven will be poured into our souls, and fill them with a happiness infinitely surpassing all the gratifications which the things of the world can give us.

3. But if the delights of the soul will be perfect, the body also will have its reward. St. Paul speaking of the body says: "It is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it shall rise in glory; it is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power; it is sown as a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body" (I. Cor. xv. 41). The apostle here speaks of the body as it now is, and as it shall be hereafter. Now weak and corrupt, it will then be glorious and powerful; and since God has fitted His rewards to the nature of the beings who are to enjoy them, we know that He has prepared special delights for the body. Now our bodies are subject to many pains, to cold, hunger, fatigue, and the like, but hereafter all this will be changed. Each sense will have its reward, and this reward will be full, complete, far surpassing any joy that the world can give to us.

4. But we must remember that the crowning glory of all this is that the delights, the bliss of heaven is to last forever. The joys of this world are short; they are very changeable, but the happiness of heaven will never end. Think of the great saints, who died just after the Redemption; they have enjoyed the happiness of heaven ever since, and will ever do so without cessation. Things on earth are limited. We see the little child; we notice that child in after years grown up to manhood; we follow him one day to see him laid in the grave. But in heaven there is no death, no time, no end, but one long continuation of unspeakable delights. But why go on? No matter how many beautiful pictures we draw in our minds, they will never give us an adequate idea of heaven's happiness. In the end we must cry out with St. Paul: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him" (I. Cor. ii. 9).

The great St. Ignatius, brethren, became acquainted with a nobleman in Paris named Francis. St. Ignatius seeing the many good qualities of the nobleman resolved to win him to God. He began and he continued to repeat the words of our Lord: "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" At first Francis was annoyed; he listened with contempt. But he began gradually to listen calmly. He applied the words to his own case. What would it profit him to obtain all his ambitious desires, to become great and powerful, if in the end he lost his soul? This made such an impression upon him that he became a disciple of St. Ignatius, and in after years a great and wonderful saint. We know him now as St. Francis Xavier, the illustrious apostle of the

Indies (Alban Butler). Would to God they would make such an impression on you, brethren. Repeat Christ's words to yourself again and again; let them sink deep into your hearts; make them the motive power of your lives. Set not your hearts on the things of earth, but upon the things in heaven. Attend above all things to the welfare of your souls, and never let the things of the world hinder you from doing so. Begin at once, for life is short; the end may be near; you may never see another Lent, and, therefore, be convinced and correct the error of your ways, or you may when it is too late realize with fear and terror that it profiteth a man nothing if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul; and that there is nothing which he can give in exchange for his soul.

II.—THE ENEMIES OF OUR IMMORTAL SOULS.

"For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places."—Ephes. vi. 12.

SYNOPSIS.—*Introduction.*—*Prudent to know our enemies.*

I. Satan our enemy: 1. Nature of Satan. 2. His many wiles and deceits. 3. Remedies against him.

II. A corrupt world our enemy: 1. What is meant by the world here. 2. How to overcome the world.

III. The flesh is our enemy: 1. How degrading immorality is. 2. Remedies against the flesh.

Conclusion.—*Watch and pray, keep from our enemies; have instant recourse to God.*

When a prudent general, brethren, has to wage war with a powerful enemy, he is most careful to obtain all the knowledge that he can about his opponents—their numbers, their position, the nature of their arms, and the tactics they are likely to adopt. This knowledge is of the utmost importance to him, for without it he may be surprised, defeated, and even put to death. But if this be necessary in an earthly warfare, how much more necessary is it in that spiritual warfare which we have to wage against the devil, the world, and the flesh that are ever seeking to destroy not our physical bodies, but our immortal souls, by leading us into every possible crime and in the end causing us to be sent to hell. Carefully, then, let us study the power, the deceits, and the weapons they use against us, in order that we may be able to resist them.

I. 1. The first great enemy with whom we have to contend is the devil, the prince and leader of those wicked angels who were cast out of heaven because they rebelled against God. Their sin was the sin of pride. The chief of that proud and rebellious throng was Lucifer, and God permits him and his wicked companions to tempt men, but at the same time gives us all-sufficient grace to resist them, if we wish to do so. Now Lucifer, having fallen from light to darkness, from happiness to misery, from heaven to hell, is full of envy, hatred, and malice, and tries by every means in his power to make all others as miserable as himself. He can not harm God, but he envies man the happiness of heaven which he himself has lost, and he, therefore, ever tries to make us unworthy of entering it, and his method is to make us disobey the commandments of our Maker and cause us to lose the favor and friendship of God. Alas! in this he succeeds, and ruins many souls, alluring them from the love of God into sin and everlasting misery. God allows us at times to be tempted in order that we may have occasions of proving our fidelity to Him and our love for Him. But we must ever remember that temptation is not a sin, for Satan tempted our Lord Himself, and He was sinless. And let us not forget that we have it in our power, by the grace of God, to resist and overcome even the strongest and most obdurate temptations if we have recourse to Him. He will not suffer us to be tempted above our strength, but will give us, in the very moment of temptation, grace to resist it (I. Cor. x. 13). Hence we must never think that we can not overcome the tempter's suggestions, for we most certainly can if we will.

2. Now, although the devil has been cast out of heaven, he still retains the nature of an angel, though it is that of the wicked ones, and hence he is most crafty and cunning. His temptations are most plausible, and are adapted to times and circumstances, nay, they even have the very appearance of piety; they are even backed up, as it were, by what seem pious reasons. Seldom does he come boldly forward and tempt men to sin and tell them they are sinning, for this would put people on their guard against him. He, therefore, commences artfully, and keeps his real design back until he has prepared man's mind for it. He reasons, he argues, he pretends that to be good for us which is really evil; he combats the good ideas we have; he wins our confidence, and then his allurements are presented little by little, until we consent and fall.

First, then, let us notice that he is, as our Lord said, a liar, a mur-

derer, and the father of lies (John viii. 44). In the garden of Eden he spoke to Eve, who told him that God had forbidden our first parents to eat the fruit of the tree that stood in the midst of paradise, that they should not touch it, lest perhaps they should die (Gen. iii. 3). But the devil argues with the woman: "Why hath God commanded you, that you should not eat of every tree of paradise?" (verse 1). Peacefully the woman is obedient to her Maker without questioning the reasons of His giving this command, but behold how Satan's question is of such a nature as to make her think God unreasonable and unkind in imposing this law. Having done this he quickly says: "No, you shall not die the death. For God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened: and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (verses 4, 5). Then Eve looked at the tree, saw the fruit was good to eat, and fair to the eyes and delightful to behold, therefore she partook of it, and gave some to her husband, Adam, who followed her example. See how the devil, then, most artfully by his words led the woman to think that God should not have given such a command; then he caused her to gaze upon the fruit, and it appeared delightful; the devil then deceives her by the lie: "No, you shall not die; you shall be as gods," and she and her husband fall miserably. "You shall be as gods;" yea, pride was a passion with which he was fully acquainted, for it was that by which he had so miserably fallen himself. Here we have a clear picture of Satan's deceit and treachery. He comes with his questions about the commandments of God; he puts it into our hearts to wonder why God should give us this precept or that command, makes us believe there is little or no harm in doing so, that we will not be punished, that what he suggests is very good and beautiful, and we pause, argue with him for a while and then yield. We know well what happened when our first parents ate of the forbidden fruit. By this act "sin entered into the world, and by sin death" (Rom. v. 12). From that moment Adam and his descendants became subject to death in this world, and what is more grievous, to death and endless misery in the next. And, alas! the devil, by the same method, continues to tempt men and women to disobey God, to commit every kind of crime and sin, and he frequently succeeds. Terrible, indeed, is the number of his victims, and amongst them some great men whom it seemed impossible for him to overcome. Amongst those whom he has caused to sin, were Peter, who denied he knew our Lord, and Solomon, who

was so great and wise. If such towers of strength as these fell, does it not behoove us to be ever on our guard, to be ever ready to meet the tempter's wiles? His deceits are many. He appeals often to our imagination and darkens our understanding, but we must act according to reason and not be deceived by his falseness. He promises us happiness, but there is no true joy in doing what he suggests, and in the end it leads to hell. He makes use of our special failings, he approaches our self-love, but whether our failing be love of money, or position, or sensuality, or pride, or drunkenness, we must tear it out of our hearts, we must lay the axe to the root, and thus overcome Satan's suggestions.

3. It is impossible here to lay down rules which would meet every temptation, but a few general remarks may be of great use. First, then, never trust to your own strength in temptations—have instant recourse to prayer. You may fancy yourself strong enough, you may have made up your mind not to listen, but if you presume thus you will surely fall. Remember what our Lord told St. Peter: "Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. xxvi. 41). Yet Peter watched not but slept, and we know how miserably he fell and denied his divine Master. Dare we sinners then presume, without prayer, to withstand the devil when even an apostle fell for lack of it? In the second place, we can not too fully realize that the devil is in no way our friend, but our most deadly enemy. He has no love for us, but the greatest hatred and malice possible. How does he treat us? When we unfortunately consent to his suggestions, we find no real pleasure, no real solid joy in the sins we commit to please him. And what is his motive? He does not wish to give us happiness, but he knows that every sin we commit binds us more to him, and he hates God, and wants to take us from God, from that heaven which he has lost, and drag us down into hell. And does he there reward us for serving him? No, there he vents his malice upon us, there he uses every artifice he can to make us endure the most horrible torments for ever. God, our loving Father, rewards us with eternal happiness when we serve Him, but the devil is a most hard and tyrannical master, and when we do his wishes, he inflicts endless torments upon us. In the third place, therefore, we must never, as far as we possibly can avoid, have anything to do with such a monster. Never argue with him, never discuss the fact as to whether the sin he suggests be mortal or venial, but the very instant you recognize his

presence, turn immediately and rush into the arms of your loving Father by prayer, and ask Him to protect you. If you were weak and unarmed would you remain in the presence of your most powerful enemy who had every kind of weapon and sought your physical life? Certainly not, and why, then, should you be so foolish as to endanger your spiritual life, the life of your immortal soul? Pray fervently, then, when you recognize the tempter's voice in your hearts; listen not to his artful suggestions; believe nothing that he tells you; for he is a liar and a murderer whose only wish is to destroy you and bring you to hell.

II. 1. The second great enemy with whom we have to contend is the world, or that large number of men and women who live for "the things of the earth," to gratify their passions and satisfy their sinful desires. They live but for honors, riches, and carnal pleasures; they ridicule religion and piety, and in consequence scatter over the world false maxims and principles, which deceive and ruin others. Now, as the world in this sense consists of men and women who are similar to ourselves, and since in our daily life we are compelled for one reason or another to mix with them, they are a temptation to us, a great incentive to sin. The world acts upon us in many ways and uses every artifice it can to lead us to sin. The youth often meets with a number of young men who ask him to join them. He may at first refuse, but they continue to ask, and he yields. These gay young men spend their evenings in the drinking saloons; their mouths are full of immodest stories; they laugh at religion; and they jeer at the youth when he first refuses to take too much drink; they mock him when he is shocked at their immoral talk; and this the youth can not bear, for he dreads being laughed at, and soon he is as bad as any of the others. The young girl enticed out of her parents' house, attends balls, parties, and dances. For a while she retains her honor. But the music and the whirl of such places excite her and seem to please her. Soon she is found at theaters and parties oftener than at home, and soon you will hear immoral words fall from her lips. Men flatter her; they profess friendship for her, and some please her more than others. She selects one, meets him frequently in dangerous and lonely places, and soon her purity, her virtue is gone, and she gradually sinks lower and lower, forgets her religion, nay, laughs at it, and becomes a depraved and immoral woman, a woman of the world, who will henceforth labor to bring other pure young girls down to her own degraded state. It would

be easy to give many other examples of the manner in which the world influences us and leads us into crime; how it teaches women to become calumniators, slanderers, and tale bearers; how it leads men into crimes of theft, drunkenness, immorality, and such like crimes, but we have said sufficient. Like the devil, under whose guidance it acts, the world is most deceitful and cunning, and it will profess a feeling of friendship which does not exist. How, then, must we guard against it? What must we do to overcome it?

2. To do so let us see how evil it is. First, our Lord tells us, that the world hates Him (John xv. 18); that it neither sees nor knows the Spirit of truth (John xiv. 17); that its works are evil (John vii. 7); that as the world has hated Him so it will hate His disciples (John xv. 19). The apostles give us a clear idea of the world's character. St. Paul tells us to be not conformed to this world (Rom. xii. 2); St. James says, the friends of this world are enemies of God (iv. 4). St. John informs us, that the whole world is seated in wickedness (I. John v. 19). Surely, when we hear from the very lips of Christ and His apostles how terribly dangerous the world is, this in itself will make us fear it, and do our utmost to resist it. Again there may be certain people in our district who are very much affected with a worldly spirit, and who are more notorious than others; it may be that there is a woman living next door to us who is a tale bearer and a drunkard, and she comes into our home to calumniate others and to send for drink. Or there may be a person who visits us with bad and wicked intentions in his heart, who wishes to lead us into the sin of drunkenness or immorality. Need we say that such people are to be kept out, that your doors are to be closed against them? Whatever be the cost, you must keep worldlings from you, and you must not go to them, if you wish to save your soul. Next, we are well aware that there are certain places in which we are sure to meet the spirit of the world. Such places as drinking saloons and theaters are full of this spirit. In the saloon we meet with a great many men, and women, too, who hold religion up to ridicule, and who are ever fond of talking about sensual, carnal things. Their talk is wretched, their conduct fearful, and they will invite us, if we go there, to drink with them, to join them in their carousals. Ah, how many souls are now in hell whose ruin began from such a cause as this. The theater in like manner is most dangerous. What is principally seen on the stage? Love, the most violent and dangerous passion of the heart, is there depicted with an

unwholesome fervor. Ambition and revenge are set forth as the accomplishments of a great man, yet how much this is opposed to the Gospel law of humility and mercy. We do not absolutely say that it is always unlawful to go to the theater, but when we know from experience that it is for us an immediate occasion of sin, we are bound to keep from it. We are also bound to stay away if the play is known to be bad and immodest, for he that loveth danger shall perish in it. But the surest and the best rule of all is to frequent such places as seldom as possible. We must watch and pray that God may keep us from the contagion of the world.

III. 1. The third enemy we have to contend with is the flesh. By the flesh we mean corrupt nature, or the craving our body has for sensual gratifications. This enemy is the most dangerous of the three, because it is in our own household, is part of ourselves. When one in the house is an enemy, he may depart and go over to our foes, or he may lead the foe into our very home. Does not the flesh do this? God created man in a state of innocence, and whilst in that state he had no difficulty in obeying God; but after the fall, man began to part from God and love himself, his own flesh, and he began to satisfy the cravings of his own heart, and went further and further from his Maker. Self-love took such a firm hold of his heart that his understanding was darkened, and he lived more like a brute than the noble creature that God had made, and God seeing all this repented that He had made man (Gen. vi. 5, 6). How lowering, how degrading is it for man, who is made to the image of God, to sink through sensuality to the level of the animal creation. The body was made for the service of God; how fearful to use it in the service of the devil. It is a member of Christ, and how terrible, then, to use it for sin. It is the temple of the Holy Ghost; how dare we, then, defile it by immorality? Ah, how God hates and abhors such sins.

2. How must we overcome the flesh? By avoiding all gluttony, sloth, and idleness, which strengthen the flesh and increase its desires. By avoiding the person, books, or pictures which excite the flesh or cause it to tempt us. A holy man was once tempted by a wicked woman named Zoe. He was about to yield to the temptation, when God's grace filled him with remorse. He returned to the cell where he dwelt, kindled a large fire, and thrust his feet into the flames till the burning of his flesh caused him to cry aloud with anguish. The woman, hearing the noise, ran to the spot, and the holy man cried to her: "Ah, how shall I be able to support the fire

of hell, if I can not endure this earthly fire, which in comparison with it is but an empty shadow?" This man was St. Martinian, and he thus not only saved his soul from pollution, but converted the woman also (cf. His Life: Feb. 13).

Behold, then, brethren, the three great powerful enemies we have to wage war with if we would save our immortal souls. We have seen their deceits, their artful, cunning ways, and we must watch and pray and keep out of their way as far as we can. But the moment we know they are present, that very instant we must fly to God, ask Him for help and grace, and be determined to die a thousand times, rather than yield to their suggestions. Realize, brethren, that you are alone against three cunning, powerful foes, and that you will surely fall if you do not pray. Pray, then, at all times, but especially pray during the time of trial and temptation.

III.—THE VICES THAT RUIN OUR IMMORTAL SOULS.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me."—Luke ix. 23.

SYNOPSIS.—Introduction.—Mortification characteristic of Christ's disciples.

I. The Vice of Pride: 1. Is the fundamental vice; caused rebellion in heaven and on earth. 2. Is most powerful with the human heart; its sad effects. 3. We have no reasons to be proud, but many to be humble. 4. God's hatred of pride; are we proud?

II. The Vice of Covetousness: 1. Its nature and the folly of it. 2. The sad effects of it; the crimes it causes. 3. The doom of the covetous man; we must pay our debts.

III. The Vice of Lust: 1. How widespread, often secret. 2. Remedies against impurity.

IV. The Vice of Intemperance: 1. Very widespread; ruins body and mind; causes fearful crimes. 2. Total abstinence the remedy; moderate drinking dangerous; St. Monica and the wine.

Conclusion.—Practical point: Are we proud? are we covetous? etc.

These words of our Lord, dear brethren, set before us a most distinct feature in the disciple or follower of Christ. At the moment of Baptism we promised to renounce the devil with all his works, the world with all its pomps, the flesh with all its iniquities, and we chose the Son of God to be our model and our Leader. And Christ here points out that those who would be His disciples, not alone in name, but also in reality, must be men and women of mortification,

men and women who are to deny themselves, not now and then, but continually, daily. How fearful this sounds to the worldling and the libertine, who hate the very thought of mortification, and who live but for pleasure, for fame, and for wealth. Instead of being men of self-denial, they are proud, intemperate, lustful, and covetous, though these vices ruin and destroy their immortal souls and bring them to everlasting misery in the next life. Let us study these evils, and see if we who in name are Christians and Catholics do not in reality act as though we were children of the world, as though we were licentious.

I. 1. Christ, in establishing our holy religion, wished it to be for us a rule of conduct which would correct the false notions which formed the character of the human heart. But the corruption of our nature, which flowed from the fall of our first parents, not only influenced our inclinations to good, but likewise impaired our power of discriminating between good and evil. Hence, we see many qualities exhibited in the world which the so-called wise men differ about, and which some hold to be intrinsically evil, and others intrinsically good. The worldling, captivated by spacious appearances, rather than real worth, places himself under the control of qualities, vicious in their nature, and most injurious to the welfare of his soul. He listens not to authority, nor does he heed the warning of those who see things as they are in the sight of God, rather than in the false conceptions of men. But there is one false quality, one false feature in the life of worldlings, and that is pride. This vice may be termed an overweening idea of our own dignity, which causes a deficiency in the due respect we should have for others. It was this vice which filled the heart of Satan when he rebelled against God. He would exalt his throne above the stars, and make himself like to the Most High. But God spared neither him nor the other angels who took part with him, but cast them down into the lower hell, "unto torments to be reserved unto judgment" (II. Peter ii. 4). As pride introduced rebellion into heaven, so it was this dreadful vice which produced rebellion on earth. "No, you shall not die the death; you shall be as gods" (Gen. iii. 4, 5), were Satan's words when he tempted our parents, and they, consenting to his wishes, ate the fruit, and having disobeyed God, they were humbled, punished, cast out of the garden of Eden with the sentence of death upon them.

2. As pride brought sin into the world, it may be called the root-vice, or the great fundamental evil of the human heart. The devil

ever plants and nourishes it in the hearts of his children; it is the leading principle by which he actuates them; nay, together with the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, there is no passion which moves the heart of the libertine more powerfully than pride. It is seen in either sex, and in every age; it bears full sway over the carnal heart. It is always planted on some fancied superiority; it ever seeks to maintain such a superiority. Pride, therefore, as it runs through all the actions of the libertine, produces fearful effects. It causes the strong to oppress the weak, the rich and powerful to trample on the humble and the poor; and because men will not be trampled upon, pride causes anger, hatreds, quarrels, dissensions, murders, and such like. If we trace the cause of the many evils that are in the world, and seek to find the reason of the many crimes that are committed, we can trace them to this high opinion we have of ourselves, this vice of pride. When a man thinks too much of himself, he naturally thinks too little of others, and they resent this and will not endure it, hence the confusion, the fearful evils it produces among men.

3. But upon what is this superiority or supposed excellence founded? Men and women show, both in their language and actions, that they esteem themselves very highly, yet we have no reason to do so. God alone is great. He alone can truly claim greatness. What was man before the creation? Nothing. We owe our very existence to God. But what are we now? Sinners who but for God's mercy would be in hell. If we have talents, others have greater talents; if we have to rule, there are thousands who are more fit to rule than we are. If we have rank, wealth, learning, that is no reason why we should lord it over others, since these things are not truly our own, but belong to God, who gave these gifts to us to use for His glory and not our own. What room have we for pride, when we think of our beginning and last end, of what we were and what we may be if lost in hell? How can we be proud, when we think of our misery, our corruption, that we will soon be mere dust and ashes? Such thoughts as these should make us abase ourselves before all, should make us truly humble. Pride is a lie, because founded on falsehood, and humility is truth, because founded on our demerits. Pride is a robbery, because it is taking to ourselves what belongs to God. Pride is the root of all evil; humility is the foundation of every virtue.

4. Need we wonder, then, that this vice is an abomination in God's

sight? This is clearly shown by Holy Writ. "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke xviii. 14). "Every proud man is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xvi. 5). "God resisteth the proud, but to the humble he giveth grace" (I. Peter v. 5). O blind and wretched that we are, how dare we think anything of ourselves? Does not the state of our own souls, our many frailties, our imperfections and sins, show us clearly that we ought to humble ourselves in the dust, because we are nothing? Well indeed may it be said to us: "Why is earth and ashes proud?" (Ecclus. x. 9). The true, loyal Catholic should look to Christ his Lord and Model, who says: "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. xi. 29). Examine your hearts, then, and see if you are presumptuous, if you are disdainful to others, if you frequently contend with them, if you often wrangle with them, if you are conceited. If the answer is in the affirmative, then tremble, for these are but the signs of pride, and "from pride all perdition took its beginning."

II. 1. Pride is usually united with the vice of covetousness, which is an inordinate love of wealth or earthly possessions. A man that is proud seeks for that which keeps up his so-called superiority over others, and he thinks that nothing can do this better than riches. The more man gratifies this love of wealth, the stronger the craving becomes; and no matter how much his possessions increase his covetousness or greed increases also. Money, therefore, becomes his idol, the object of his veneration (Col. iii. 5). Yet indeed such a man is miserably poor in reality. He cares nothing about the riches of virtue, grace, and glory, which are eternal and which will profit him much hereafter. Can these riches of his save or redeem his soul when it is once condemned? Can they bring it back out of hell? No; for the covetous man's wealth can not be taken beyond the grave; he will stand before his Judge not as a rich man, nor a poor man, but as saint or sinner.

2. But the man whose heart is so fixed upon possessing the goods of this earth is not at all particular as to how he does so. This vice makes him mean and hard-hearted to the poor, and he is not moved by the widow's tears nor the orphans' cries, but he oppresses every one. But if he be a tradesman or a man of business, he is extortionate, a cheat and a thief. As a tradesman he will require far more for his goods than they really are worth, and he thus trades upon the ignorance of his customers, who may not know the real value,

and robs them in this way. He may have also the money or property of others in his charge, yet he is careful to appropriate as much of it as he can to his own use. In every possible way he makes money, no matter whether the way be honest or not. He knows little about honesty, and he cares less. He is unjust, a liar, a thief, a cheat, a man who puts all his trust in riches, who lives but for this world and cares little about the next. Trust in God and the love of God is quite banished from his heart. He has one god, one idol, and that is wealth.

3. The vice, then, of avarice, or greed, is one that leads a man to the most frightful crimes. Judas sold his divine Master for money, and others act equally as bad. Such men must remember their duties toward the poor, and the Lord says the rich must help the poor. He takes what is done to them as done to himself. "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it to me" (Matt. xxv. 40). What will Christ say to the covetous man at the day of judgment? "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink. I was a stranger, and you took me not in: naked, and you covered me not: sick and in prison, and you did not visit me" (Matt. xxv. 41-43). Hell, then, is the portion of the covetous man. St. Paul confirms this. "For know you this and understand, that no fornicator, or unclean, or covetous person (which is a serving of idols), hath inheritance, in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Ephes. v. 5). Behold, then, the fearful end of the avaricious man: yet we ask ourselves, are we free from this vice? Perhaps there are some among you who are covetous, who live but for the world's goods. But if we do not do this, are we honest in our dealings with others? Do we contract large debts which we have no means or hope of paying? This is dishonesty, and we must do our best to pay; we should do with little rather than act in such a manner. Do we squander our money in high living or in useless ways, instead of paying what we owe? This is wrong, entirely wrong. See the fate of the avaricious man, and be very careful lest you may be walking in his footsteps.

III. 1. Allied or united in man's heart with pride there is another fearful vice, the concupiscence of the flesh, or impurity and lust. Many indeed are covetous in order to gain means to gratify their lust. This fearful vice is very widespread; it is nurtured in

many hearts. In some cases it is rather public, but in thousands of cases it is the great vice that runs through the hidden lives of the young, and of men and women in mature life. Great God, there are many who have few failings except this vice; they would be good men and women could they overcome it, yet on account of it they may lose their souls.

2. What first caused us to give way to this vice? Very likely evil companions, the frequenting of dangerous places, or the reading of bad books. For the future shun all these, and everything else which causes you to be tempted to this sin. No matter what it costs you, this must be done. You may have to give up one you love, but is it not far better to give up this person now than lose your soul hereafter? Can you bear the everlasting fire of hell? Yet that is the fate of the impure man or woman. St. Paul has told us that, "No fornicator, nor adulterer, nor any unclean person hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Ephes. v. 5). Do not forget to resist instantly when temptation comes—reject it at once. If you argue with it you are lost. Try to realize how lowering and degrading this vice is, how it brings you down from the high dignity of a Christian to the level of the lower creation. Chastity makes men like angels; impurity makes them like brutes. Pray most fervently to God to give you a clean heart; go as often as you can to confession; read good books instead of romances; be continually at work and avoid all sloth and idleness; be careful never to give way to gluttony or intemperance. Be not discouraged, pray often, pray continually; remain not much alone, but be in your home with your family; and be determined that come what may, you will not yield to impurity, either in thought, word, or deed, but that you will cultivate the beautiful virtue of chastity. With prayer, determination, and God's grace you will overcome your sinful habit and subdue the criminal desires of the flesh.

IV. 1. We come to another most fearful vice, which is public and notorious, and that is the vice of intemperance. There is no need here to dwell at any great length upon this terrible evil. We have but to look around us to see how widespread it is, and to know that it is the cause of almost every curse or evil that afflicts society at the present hour. Men and women of every class and of every age are in the clutches of this fearful monster. Look at the drunken man or woman, and you will notice that drink is ruining their health. As they approach you, you see that their face is bloated, their eyes are

bloodshot, their body is bent, their limbs tremble, totter, and almost refuse to support them. Drink is slow poison, and in time the drunkard becomes a decrepit, ailing man, and often sinks into an early grave. Again, look into the face of the drunkard and speak to him. As he hears your voice and turns to look at you, notice the vacant stare upon his face, listen to his incoherent, confused words. Here is a proof that drink injures the mind and in time ruins it. Very often the drunkard speaks and acts under the influence of drink, and he will tell you afterward that he does not remember doing or saying these things, and is it not clear that for a time his mind was disturbed? Sometimes the drunkard is partially mad; he is violent and quarrelsome and it is dangerous to be near him. What wonder, then, that he remains in this state, and that our lunatic asylums are full of men and women who go there through drink? This drunkard is a poor man, and he spends in the saloons what he ought to give to his poor wife and family, who are badly clothed and are without food. He is in debt, too, but he does not mind. That drunkard is a tradesman, or a man of business, but how is he attending to his duty? If his wife or some friend does not look after his business for him, he will soon be a bankrupt. This drunken woman is spending the money her husband gave her to feed and clothe herself and children; and while she is drinking her little ones are neglected, or running the streets and learning every kind of wickedness. But we need go no further. Do not the newspapers tell us, day after day, of the terrible crimes committed by men and women under the influence of strong drink? Yes, and many more are committed which we never hear of. If suffering wives and children were to speak, we would hear a great deal more, but their love keeps them silent.

2. What is more pitiful than to see what was once a noble man or woman now ruined through drink? How has drink got such a terrible hold of them? The answer is not difficult. They were enticed into the drinking saloon, and for a time they drank moderately. What followed then? This moderate drinking created a craving in their hearts which they feel they must satisfy. To do so they must increase the quantity of drink, for the craving gradually increases and demands more and more. A man craves for food; he must have it or he can not live. The craving for drink in some men is almost as strong as the craving for food, though, of course, to do without drink would not cause death. Total abstinence, then, is the real cure and the best one for the drunkard. But moderate drinkers cry out:

"Oh, why not take a little without going too far?" We answer, because there is a grave danger in doing so. If a few men or women have such a power of will that they never take too much, there are millions who have not that power, and this is proved by the fact that so many of those who take any drink at all become drunkards. Certain it is, that if a man never entered a drink shop, if he never took any drink, he would never become a drunkard. The drunkard must be careful about his prayers. One of the reasons why drink so suddenly takes firm hold of a man is because he, as a rule, nearly always neglects his religious duties, and, therefore, loses the graces and strength which they brought him. He must then resume his prayers, morning and evening especially, and at other times pray for grace to avoid drink. Let him go frequently to the Sacraments, for they give us strength and grace to lead a better life. He must avoid his old companions; he must keep out of the drink shop, for should he enter the latter, he will be sure to fall again.

We read that St. Monica had a virtuous nurse, who tried to bring her charge up in habits of self-denial and other virtues. The little Monica was trained not to drink between meals. This was done to keep her from acquiring the habit of drinking. But the very habit which the nurse impressed upon the child was destroyed by her parents sending her to the cellar to draw wine for the family. At first, from curiosity, she took little sips of it; by degrees she increased the quantity; then she drank whole cupfuls, and she liked the wine and became eager to drink it. Thus she began to sow the seeds of intemperance. But God rescued her from this danger. The young Monica had some angry words with one of the servants, and the latter, who had often accompanied her young mistress to the cellar, now called Monica a "wine-bibber," and this made Monica enter into herself. She saw her fault, deeply lamented it, and corrected it in time (Butler).

Brethren, we have studied four of the dreadful vices that ruin man's immortal soul, that lead to hell; and now the practical point is this: do any of these dreadful monsters live in your souls? Are you proud? Are you covetous? Are you immoral? Are you a drunkard? Be not too quick in answering; do not deceive yourselves; examine your hearts carefully. God forbid that we should shelter all these vices in our souls, but is there even one there? Ah, if there is, for the love of heaven, prepare yourself well for a good earnest confession and begin life anew. For God's sake give up your sins,

change your lives, and walk in the footsteps of your Leader, who says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me."

IV.—THE VICES THAT INJURE OUR IMMORTAL SOULS.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you."—John xv. 12.

SYNOPSIS.—*Introduction.*—*The scene in the supper room.*

I. The Sin of Rash Judgment: 1. What is meant by rash judgment. 2. It may be grievously sinful. 3. It is Pharisaical and founded on pride.

II. The Sins of Calumny and Detraction: 1. How easily calumny and detraction spread. 2. They offend against charity. 3. The ways in which these sins are committed. 4. They involve the duty of restitution.

III. The Sin of Anger: 1. The folly of anger. 2. The sad effects of anger. 3. We must forgive those who calumniate and detract us. Theodosius and the people of Thessalonica.

Conclusion.—*Avoid these sins of Rash Judgment, Calumny, and Anger.*

How beautiful was the picture, dear brethren, yet how solemn was the occasion, when our Lord uttered these holy words. Behold Him seated in the supper room, and His chosen twelve around Him, and He is speaking to them in a most impressive and loving manner. For the hour has now arrived in which He must drink His bitter cup of sorrow. Soon the furies of hell will have Him in their power and will vent their most fiendish malice upon Him, and nail Him to the gibbet of the cross. Knowing all this, that Sacred Heart which delights to dwell among us could not allow Him to leave us without giving us an antidote to sweeten sorrow and pain. No; He must needs unite our hearts to His, and each of us to one another; He must inflame our hearts with that love which consumed His own, so that when weighed down with sorrow and anguish, the union of our hearts might make us strong and valiant soldiers in our spiritual warfare and make our life here a foretaste of the bliss of heaven. Like the father, then, who is about to leave his children, and who puts all his love into his words and actions during the last moments he is with them, so our Lord, in His last discourse before His sacred

Passion, speaks to us in the persons of His disciples and says: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." Impress these words upon your hearts, brethren; vividly keep before your mind the scene in the supper room when they were uttered. Last Sunday we spoke of the many terrible vices that ruined man's immortal soul, and now we wish to speak of other vices which seriously injure it, and which are apt to creep into our daily lives, and offend against the second great commandment, the love and charity we owe our neighbors. We have chosen the scene of our Lord's last discourse to His apostles because it portrays what that love ought to be, and now let us study how we unfortunately oppose Christ's wishes.

I. 1. The majority of men and women on earth have to live an active and public life, and are, therefore, continually mixing and communing with their fellow creatures. But because there is a certain proneness to evil in each of us, derived from our first parents' fall, so we are ever quick to notice the weaknesses of others, and to dwell upon, and think over them as though we were about to pronounce sentence upon them. Indeed, men and women are so busy in finding out the faults and imperfections of their neighbor, that one would think they had no other business in life. Now this in itself is wrong, for it shows that we are proud in ourselves, and are suspicious of others, and think them evil; and we ought to know that, unless we are parents or superiors, we should mind our own business and let other people manage their own affairs. It is no business of ours to judge our neighbor unless lawfully appointed to do so. We judge him rashly, when hastily, or without sufficient grounds, we think evil of, or form a bad opinion of him. True, there are some of us who are mean enough to play the spy upon our neighbor's actions; yet, though we do this, we seldom know much about his private life, and if we did know his hidden life and the motives and circumstances which cause him to act as he does, perhaps we would reverse our decisions, and account him a good man. Hence we see clearly that there is danger in judging at all. We must not rest our decisions upon mere report or hearsay, but upon absolute truth and clear, visible facts. But let us judge ourselves, and not others.

2. Now there are many who think that rash judgment is not a sin, or that it is only a very small one at least. But this is wrong, for if we form a rash judgment about some particular person known to us, in a serious matter, this is a mortal sin. And have we not done this

often? May not our souls be loaded with mortal sins of this kind? But some ask, what injury does this do our neighbor? The answer is, that we injure him in our own estimation, and he may wish to stand well with us, and would most likely be hurt if he knew what we believed about him. And such a judgment will prejudice us against him, and make us act toward him in a way that is unkind and uncharitable. For true charity requires an unprejudiced mind and an open heart.

3. Rash judgment is a most common sin; it is found in almost every class of people, whether rich or poor. The man or woman who judges thus, are generally very wicked in their own lives, and they think that every one is like them. The foundation of all this is the vice of pride, for we want to convince ourselves that others have faults and failings which we have not. Rash judgment was a very common sin among the Pharisees, and we find our Lord very often condemned them for watching others, forming rash judgments, and even to a certain extent promulgating them. They were presumptuous, had a very high opinion of their own merits, and a great contempt for others. We, therefore, behold the proud Pharisee in the Temple, where instead of making a humble confession of his sins, he recites a long list of his own good works, and thanks God that he was not as bad as other men, particularly the publican who was praying in the Temple at the same moment. But we have the words of our Lord Himself, that the poor publican, who confessed himself a sinner and cried for mercy, was more acceptable in the eyes of God than the proud, presumptuous Pharisee. Yet the Pharisee had sat in judgment upon him, and called him an "extortioner, unjust, and an adulterer" (cf. Luke xviii. 11). Remember, it is most dangerous to judge others, for God will judge us as we judge, not indeed rashly, but with the same severity: "Judge not, that you may not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged" (Matt. vii. 1, 2). "Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned" (Luke vi. 37). Here, indeed, we are told very distinctly that, if we by our rash judgment condemn others, God will also condemn us. Let us be careful, then, to mind our own affairs and let our neighbor mind his, and to foster a kind and benignant heart toward him, and in a spirit of charity excuse even that which is imperfect in him, knowing that we ourselves have many failings which we would not like revealed.

II. 1. But although, brethren, rash judgment comes from the

evil qualities of our own hearts, yet very often the mischief does not stop there. Out of the heart man speaks, and, therefore, on account of spite, or jealousy, and other causes, we go about the world and talk freely and frequently about the faults and the failings of our neighbors. We get others who are foolish and unwise to join us in these conversations, and we discuss our fellow man, what he says, and what he does, and what others have said about him, and such like. In fact, we hold a sort of informal court; we sit in judgment upon our neighbor; we are both witnesses and judge, and we condemn him. But a little later after we have parted those who have been with us go elsewhere, and they tell others what we have told them; and so the story spreads gradually from one street to another, until at last it is all over the town. When the men or women whom we have condemned appear in the street people seem to avoid them, to look unkindly upon them, and are often most cruel and uncharitable to them. Now, if we ask these people why they are treating this man unkindly, they will answer: "Oh, Mrs. So-and-so told me last night that he was a real downright bad man." But we continue and ask if Mrs. So-and-so is right, if she was sure of what she said, and again we get the answer: "Well, I do not know, but that is what she told me. I believe she did say a third party told her." Thus it is that through sinful gossip, and on mere hearsay, many a good and innocent man or woman is condemned and seriously injured in worldly prospects by the lies and tattling of worldly people.

2. How strange it is, that there are many whose chief pleasure in company seems to consist in telling ill-natured stories of others, of the truth of which they are by no means certain, and which, even if they were true, charity should teach them to conceal. Are we not vexed and displeased if we hear that tales to our disadvantage have been circulated about us? Do we not resent this, and do we not feel hurt, when we know full well that what has been said about us is untrue? Yet, why do we not think about this when tempted to talk about others? Do not the Holy Scriptures say, "See thou never do to another what thou wouldst hate to have done to thee by another" (Tobias iv. 16)? And our Lord has said: "All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them" (Matt. vii. 12). We see, therefore, that this injurious talk about our neighbors is a breach of the commandment which says: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. xxii. 39).

3. But since there are various ways of injuring our neighbor, and

as people have erroneous ideas in this matter, let us see what is meant by calumny, slander, and detraction. Calumny, or slander, is to say or insinuate anything about our neighbor which we know to be absolutely false. Detraction is making known the real, but secret, faults of our fellow man. If our story, then, in either case injures our neighbor seriously, we are guilty of mortal sin, which, as we know, kills the soul and deserves hell. There are some of us who think that, if we are sure our neighbor has a fault, we may, if we like, tell it to others. This is false, for we have no right to reveal our neighbor's faults, since this would lead to crime and the greatest confusion. Does not our own reason tell us this, for, what would we feel if every one had the right to reveal every fault he found in us? And the law of God, except when the public safety is at stake, or the conversion of a sinner may be gained, or when necessary to save an innocent person; actually forbids us to reveal what we have learned in secret about our neighbor's faults. Hence Christ says: "Why seest thou the mote in thy brother's eye: but the beam that is in thy own eye thou considerest not?" (Luke vi. 41).

4. But another feature in this matter, and a most important one, is this, that when we by our calumny or detraction have injured a fellow creature's character, we are bound to make him restitution. A man's character is as much his own possession as the wealth he has in lands or goods, and it is more precious to him than gold; and if we stole his purse, justice would oblige us to restore it, and, therefore, it is that when we have stolen our neighbor's character from him by our calumny or detraction we are bound to undo the mischief we have done him, and restore his good name as far as we can. And if the injury done him amounts to a mortal sin, we are bound under the penalty of mortal sin to do all we possibly can to restore his character and compensate him for any loss he may have sustained through our action. To do this, brethren, to restore a man's good name is not an easy task. Yet it must be accomplished. Hence, let us avoid such a serious crime as that of injuring our fellow man by our stories and lies.

III. 1. But rash judgment and detraction bring forth another serious evil, which often leads to the most fearful crimes. There are many people who are so sensitive to the slightest offence against them that they fly into the most furious passion, become terribly angry and seek revenge. Anger is in itself an inordinate desire of revenge. Hence when men hear that others have injured them, by calumny

and detraction, their passion of anger is inflamed against the calumniators and detractors. Now, a man may be displeased, and wish his calumniators to be punished by proper lawful authorities, and this is allowed, for we know that Christ Himself drove the buyers and sellers out of the Temple, on account of their faults. Still this must be done with the greatest prudence, and the desire of revenge must not be allowed to creep in. But when the desire for revenge comes in, and our feelings take the form of hatred and contention, then our anger is irregular and forbidden by the law of God. Anger of this kind shows a want of that true wisdom which every true disciple of Christ should have. For has not Christ told us that we must take up our cross daily and follow Him? Has He not often said that the world hated Him, and would hate His followers? In other words, He tells us that mortification and sufferings of every kind are to be the portion of His followers. What kind of disciples are we, then, if we can not suffer without flying into the most furious passions and seeking revenge? We are not followers of Christ if we do so, but children of the evil one, who is ever full of hatred and revenge.

2. The vice of anger leaves many sad effects behind it. When the reason is blinded by the fury of this vice, men are partly mad, and scarcely know what they are doing. It has led many to quarrel with each other, and to hate each other for life. It has led to men striking and wounding, and many murders have been committed by men when under its influence. We notice people who meet in the street, and they sneer at, and express contempt for each other. This is the effect of anger very often. These people have nourished their anger in their hearts until it has become intense hatred. They never think kindly of each other; they never speak; and in the business of life, when they are apart, they study how they can do each other injury, and they do so when they can. And yet, great God, these people go to church; they are present at Holy Mass; aye, they even approach the Holy Table, and still they hate each other. Will they go before the tribunal of judgment thus? Ah, if they do, what can they expect but eternal perdition? Yet, brethren, we meet such people as these in life, and it should be a fearful warning to us. Anger has given birth to hate in their hearts, and hate carries them on through life, till it drops them into the pit of hell.

3. But this anger is absolutely forbidden by the law of God. St. Paul says: "Let all bitterness, and anger, and indignation, and

clamor, and blasphemy be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another; merciful, forgiving one another, even as God hath forgiven you in Christ" (Ephes. iv. 31, 32). And again we are told: "Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matt. v. 22). The very spirit of Christianity condemns irregular anger. Christ has said that instead of seeking revenge for injuries and insults, we must be of a loving and forgiving temper. "If one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other. Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you" (Matt. v. 39, 44). Love, then, is to take the place of anger, and love is to rule our hearts in all our intercourse with our neighbor. Examples are not wanting to show us to what excesses anger will carry a man, and we select but one. The people of Thessalonica rebelled against the Roman governor and put him to death. The Emperor Theodosius hearing this is inflamed with anger and passion. He thereupon orders his troops, secretly, to surround the people, who are gathered together in the circus, and he thus has some seven thousand put to death without trial, and without distinguishing the innocent from the guilty. To what excesses will anger lead a man!

And now, brethren, carry your thoughts back again to the supper room, where our Lord spoke so lovingly to His disciples. What love He breathes in every word, and the very atmosphere around Him seems pregnant with it. And His holy words to us are: "Love one another as I have loved you." How do we keep this command of His? Surely we see now at least that rash judgment, calumny, detraction, anger, and such like sins, are opposed to this spirit of fraternal love which our Lord wishes to see burning in our hearts. These things are always sinful, often they are grievously sinful. Put them away, then, for ever from your hearts, and in your daily intercourse with your neighbor do not judge him, do not detract or calumniate him to others, nor allow your anger to seek revenge upon him if he offend you. On the contrary, let charity, that heavenly love, run through all your dealings with him, and often think of Christ's words: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

V.—THE VIRTUES THAT NOURISH AND SUSTAIN OUR IMMORTAL SOULS.

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God.”—I. Cor. x. 31.

SYNOPSIS.—*Introduction.—The peace of a good conscience.*

I. The Virtue of Humility. 1. Humility the foundation of holiness. 2. Humility the remedy for pride. 3. Humility repairs the fall of Adam. 4. The necessity of humility. 5. Three sorts of humility.

II. The love of God. 1. It springs from humility. 2. How we must love God. 3. How to increase our love of God.

III. The love of our neighbor. 1. Why we must love our neighbor. 2. How we must love our neighbor.

Conclusion.—King Canute's rebuke to his nobles. Heed not Satan, carry out St. Paul's advice.

What greater comfort, brethren, can a Christian have in this world than that of a good conscience? To be able to go to rest with the conviction in our minds that during the day we have done nothing wherewith our conscience can reproach us, is indeed a great and consoling thought. To be able to say, “I have performed all my duties; I have avoided occasions of sin; I have resisted temptation; I have subdued all my passion, and done all things for the glory and honor of God,” is indeed in itself a blessing. Yet this is what the apostle would continually have us enjoy, for he indeed exhorts us to continue doing all for the honor and glory of God. “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all for the glory of God.” During this holy season of Lent we have studied some of the vices that ruin our immortal souls, and some which seriously injure them; but now let us study some of the virtues that will nourish and sustain these souls, and enable us to do what the apostle advises.

I. 1. Of the many great and wondrous virtues conspicuous in the life of Christ on earth there is none more prominent than humility. It was His darling virtue, the one with which He was clothed throughout the whole of His life on earth. The poverty and lowliness of His earthly parents, the circumstances of His birth, His hidden life, even His very death, and burial in another's tomb, all show how dear to His heart was the virtue of humility. And He has shown us this by His own words, for while He practised all other virtues in a most eminent degree, yet it is humility that He

especially recommends to us: "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. xi. 29). Why, we ask, was this virtue so prominent in our Lord's character, why does He so strongly inculcate its practice? It is because humility is the fundamental virtue, the groundwork or foundation most essential for all holiness of life, because it places man in his true position with regard to God and his neighbor. Man, made from the common earth, was placed in the garden of Eden to serve and obey his Creator. But after a little time the tempter came, and man listened to him, and yielded consent to his suggestions. "You shall be as gods," said Satan, and man entered into Satan's plan. He would be great, be like to his Maker, he would know good from evil. But in the fall of man the obedience due to God was involved; nay, it was precisely by an act of disobedience that man offended his Maker and fell. "You shall be as gods" kept ringing in his ears, and he exalted himself, and so the vice of pride came into the world.

2. But the evil of Adam's fall did not stop here. As the human race increased, as time went on, the pride engendered in our first parents' hearts grew stronger and stronger with each succeeding generation, till man forgot his position as creature, forgot, as it were, that God was his Lord and Master and that he was bound to obey and serve Him. It was to remedy this that Christ the Son of God, who was truly great, left His throne in heaven, and coming down to earth, took upon Himself the form of a servant and became subject and obedient to His own creatures. Man, made from the slime of the earth, would not obey, because pride had entered his heart, had made him think himself great, whereas he was nothing, and because of this supposed greatness, he questioned, and in his heart criticized many of God's commandments, and would not obey them. He would not do the will of his Maker, but his own will, he would do as he wished.

3. Humility, then, is that great virtue which repairs in man's soul the great evil arising from the fall of Adam; it takes from man's heart that false idea he had of his own greatness, and shows him that he is nothing but vileness and utter misery. At the same moment it fills our minds with a clear knowledge of the awful majesty of God, of His power, wisdom, and His infinite goodness to mankind. Then, by way of contrast, we compare ourselves with God, and on the one hand we see that He is all that can be called great, powerful, holy, noble, and good; while on the other, we are nothing, evil,

corrupt, drawn from nothing, made of the common earth to which we shall return. These considerations, then, move the soul, for they pass from the mind or intellect to the heart or will, and eagerly we take up our true position as servants of the most High and are ever most ready to do His holy will. Humility, therefore, is a virtue by which we acknowledge the infinite majesty of God, His absolute power and right over us, and all other creatures, and by which we wholly subject ourselves, body and soul, to His holy will in all things. Humility consists in two acts: one in the understanding, the other in the heart or will. By the first we learn to know ourselves, and we learn to know God. By the second act we resolve to put ourselves in our proper position toward our Creator. Briefly, we acknowledge that since He has made us, He has a perfect right over us, and we are ready and most willing to do His will.

4. The necessity of humility is very evident. St. Augustine tells us that it is "the most essential virtue," and the very foundation of all sanctity. All that we do on earth is either with or against God's will: we obey God or we disobey Him. But all our holiness consists in obeying Him; and what makes us obey? It can be nothing else than the internal act of our own will, by which we acknowledge God's right and power over us. Yet this is the very essence of humility, and if all our holiness consists in obedience, and humility is the cause of obedience, then we can not be holy without it. In fact, when we outwardly obey any precept or command of God, it is the internal act of humility which prompts us to obey, so that obedience in this way is but the outward manifestation of interior humility. Clearly, then, we see how these two great virtues are connected, and how necessary humility is to all holiness.

5. But there are three sorts of humility. The first is the humility of our own interior, according to which we set no value whatever upon ourselves nor upon anything we have. We must never for an instant become vain of our talents nor of any accomplishments we have, for they are not truly ours, but are the gifts of God. The second is, be humble toward God. Remember His incomprehensible greatness, the many wonderful favors He has conferred upon men, and upon you in particular, for each of us can recall gifts and mercies which God has bestowed upon us, without which we would have been lost. And call to mind the fact that you have often and very grievously offended Him in many things. In the third place, be humble toward men. Some are your superiors, for God has placed them in

a higher position than you occupy, and, therefore, respect them and obey their lawful commands. Some are your equals; treat them with respect and honor, and seek not to domineer over them. As to your inferiors, be kind and charitable to them and help them in their necessities. Look into our Lord's life, study it frequently, and you will find that He acted thus, that He gave us a most striking example of humility under every possible circumstance. And when He seems to sum up His own holy life, He does it thus: "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart."

II. 1. But precisely because humility is the fundamental virtue, because it is the root-virtue, so many other noble virtues spring from it. The root placed in the earth sends forth offshoots, which in a little time pierce the earth, and sinking deeper and deeper entwine themselves around the boulders and rocks underneath the soil, and then the trunk appears and becomes strong and supple and in time sends forth many branches. So humility, sinking into the soul of man, grows and increases there and soon produces branches, other virtues, some of which are almost greater than itself. We know that internal humility becomes outward obedience; but as humility teaches us to know God, who and what He is, it also brings forth the great and holy virtue of charity. For humility teaches us to know God, and we can not truly know Him without loving Him for His goodness and His mercies, and this is charity.

2. The meaning of the word charity is dearness, or love. Charity is the greatest of all virtues, for as St. Paul says: "The greatest of these is charity" (I. Cor. xiii. 13). But this holy virtue has two branches: the love of God above all things, for His own sake, and the love of our neighbor as ourselves for God's sake. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. xxii. 37-39). Now there are many reasons for which we may love a person. We love a person who is kind to us, or because they are like in character and dispositions to ourselves. But the charity or love which we have for God must go far beyond this. We must love purely for His own sake, that is, because He is so good in Himself. To love Him with our whole hearts is to love Him truly. To love Him with our whole soul is to employ all our interior powers in His service. To love Him with our whole mind is to continually keep our thoughts and affections

fixed upon Him. Charity, then, brethren, requires us to have a disposition of heart by which we cling to God, to do what pleases and renounce what displeases Him; and we must do this, not merely because we hope for a reward from Him, but chiefly because He is goodness itself and worthy, on account of what He is, to be loved and served. By this charity we give ourselves wholly up to Him, and would suffer anything, even death, rather than offend Him by grievous sin. This is absolutely necessary for salvation. But if we wish still to be more perfect, we will renounce even venial sin for His sake, and our charity is then greater.

3. The virtue of charity is absolutely necessary for salvation, and without it, as St. Paul tells us, we profit nothing (I. Cor. xiii). But how can we increase our charity, how make it more fervent? The first means is that of earnest prayer. We should frequently ask our Father to teach us how to love Him. The next means is to make it a rule to perform every action with the special motive of pleasing Him. This the apostle requires when he says: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all things for the glory of God." Again another means is to curb all our passions and sinful inclinations, and never for an instant yield to their desires, and at the same time strive as far as possible to banish from us the many imperfections which we find in our lives. Lastly, let us often meditate upon the life of our Lord, and study His words and actions, and learn to know Him as He lived and loved us and showed us His glory while on earth.

III. 1. But charity, brethren, is twofold. We must, first, love God "above all things," and then our neighbor as ourselves. It is of the utmost importance that we understand this duty of ours as well as we possibly can, for we have to spend our lives here on earth in social and daily intercourse with our neighbor, and if we reckon up our sins and imperfections, we will find that most of them are breaches of this duty, that most of them are committed either by quarreling with, or in some way injuring, our fellow man. Now we are bound to love our neighbor, because God has ordered us to do so, and as He is our Lord and Master, He can give us any command that He wishes. It is our place to obey Him, and not to question His orders or commands. Again, we are all His children, and we can not love God our Father, unless we love those whom He loves, and He indeed loves every child He has created. Thus it is impossible, as the saints tell us, to love God truly without at the same time loving

our neighbor. In the third place, our neighbor was created for the same great end as ourselves, and will be our companions in the glory of heaven. Therefore, we must love him now, and strive by every means in our power to help him, to save his immortal soul. To love our neighbor as ourselves, then, we must regard him as another self, as one friend does another. We must wish him the same good that we wish ourselves, and we must do unto him as we would wish him to do unto us. In a word, we must make our treatment of ourselves the rule by which we should love our neighbor. The love, then, of our fellow man consists in three things; first, in wishing good to all; secondly, in doing them all the good we can, both spiritual and temporal; and thirdly, in bearing with their defects and excusing their faults.

2. With this knowledge, then, of what your duty is in this respect, let us see how you can put it into practice. Accustom yourself to look upon all men, no matter who they are, as your neighbor, and desire to do good to them all. Be kind to all, patient with them; pity the poor and help them; love the good, but bear with the sinner, and pray for his conversion. We must hate sin, which is man's work, but love the sinner, because God made him. But it is of little use to desire good to all, unless we ourselves are good to them when an occasion is offered. Hence give alms freely to help your neighbor in his corporal wants, pray for and offer him good example, and thus help him in his spiritual wants. As to his honor or reputation, preserve it as much as you can; if he is accused, defend him, endeavor to excuse them, and point to his good deeds; upon no account join those calumniators, detractors, and tale-bearers whose only object in life seems to be the ruin of their neighbor's character. And one more important point is this: that you must be careful to bear with the failings and defects of your immediate friends at home. It is sad, brethren, to hear wife and husband, brothers and sisters scolding, quarreling, and railing at each other. One is very sensitive, and the other has some failing, and the absence of true charity causes them to quarrel with each other, and makes home a place of utter misery. Ah, if ever charity was sadly wanted in any place, it is wanted indeed in many so-called Christian homes. Homes whose occupants are nominal Christians, but who in their conduct are more like demons.

Canute, the King who once reigned in England, had many flatterers about him who wished to gain the royal favor, and who, therefore, styled Canute, not only King of England, but also "Lord of the

Sea." The very elements, they said, were subject to him. Wishing to teach them a lesson, the King ordered the state chair to be taken to the shore and placed quite close to the edge of the water. The King took his seat, and when the tide came in he ordered it to retire that it might not wet its lord and master. But the waves advanced rapidly, and in a little while the King's feet were covered with water. Rising he turned to the confused nobles, and said: "Confess how vain is the power of an earthly King, compared with Him who alone can say to the waves, 'Thus far shall ye go and no farther.'" Then taking the crown off his head, he went and laid it on the great crucifix in the Cathedral of Winchester; nor did he ever wear it again. From that day forward he studied only to advance in humility and meekness, and ended a glorious reign by a saintly death (History of England).

This, brethren, should teach us the utter folly of pride and the wondrous value of humility. The nobles flattered Canute; they tried to puff him up, to fill him with pride, but his action proved them liars. So the devil often flatters us, and makes us believe we are that which we are not. For the future we must not listen to him, for he is a liar and the father of lies, a murderer from the beginning. Never forget your position as a creature, realize that your only duty on earth is to obey your Lord and Creator, and to do what He desires in all things. His wish is that you keep the two great commandments, and this you will do if you follow St. Paul's advice: "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God."

VI.—HOW TO SAVE OUR IMMORTAL SOULS.

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification.”—I. Thess. iv. 3

SYNOPSIS.—The will of God in our regard.

I. We must realize what is at stake. 1. The bliss of heaven. 2. The torments of hell. 3. We must choose one of these two ends.

II. Our will must be firm and determined. 1. Determination must be lasting. 2. We must not have a fickle will.

III. We must become men of prayer. 1. The necessity of prayer. 2. True prayer always answered. 3. Must pray always, but especially in temptation.

IV. We must frequently approach the Sacraments. 1. Of Penance. 2. Of the Holy Eucharist.

V. We must avoid occasions of sin. 1. Otherwise we shall most likely fall. 2. Christ's warning on this point.

Conclusion.—Drawn from the whole series.

Very often, my dear brethren, does the great apostle of the Gentiles, in his striking and beautiful Epistles, sum up in a few choice words a truth which might have occupied chapters. And perhaps no words can put before us more vividly, or in a more concise way, the will of God in our regard, than those we have chosen for our text: “For this is the will of God, your sanctification.” They distinctly show us that God, who made us to His own image and likeness, did not create us without a purpose. He did not create us to follow the dictates of our own will, and the desires of our own hearts; but He who is almighty, and all-wise, and holy, has concerning us a fixed, determined purpose; namely, that we should serve Him while on earth, and if faithful, reign with Him hereafter for ever in the bliss of heaven. But, alas, the evil spirit who envied man and wished to destroy him, by his wicked and evil suggestions, brought about man's fall, and still ever struggles to do the same with each of us, and hence it is that we have to do battle with this monster, to wage a continual war with him, and his allies, and, therefore, it is of the utmost importance to us to act with the greatest prudence and caution, lest a long eternity of misery and torture be our portion in the next world. During this holy season we have studied carefully the issues that are at stake; we have fully inquired into the nature of our enemies, their number and their tactics; we have noticed the wounds which they are most likely to inflict upon our souls, through the vices they suggest and inculcate; and now, almost at the close of Lent, we come to a most momentous and important question; namely,

how shall we accomplish the will of God in our regard? how shall we save our immortal souls? how sanctify them? What steps must we take to do this, to make our salvation secure?

I. 1. The first thing we must do, brethren, is to realize to the fullest possible extent the issue that is at stake. We know that the hour will come when death's icy hand will touch us, and our souls will appear before the God who created them, while our bodies will be buried in the earth till the last day has come. But why has our soul to appear before God? Ah, to receive sentence; to be judged; to be either rewarded with the happiness of heaven or tortured for ever by the fearful pains of hell. What is the happiness of heaven? What are the torments of hell? The bliss of heaven consists, in an eternal union with God our loving Father. The happiness of this world is as nothing compared to the bliss of the next. It is so great that nothing can be likened to it, as the apostle declares when he says: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man what God hath prepared for them that love him" (I. Cor. ii. 9). In heaven we shall have all our desires satisfied: there we shall rejoice in the possession of God, the author of all good: there we shall see God as He is, and have all our desires for knowledge satisfied; and in that one look of love at our Maker, we shall be lost to all pain and sorrow. All our senses will be made perfect that we may enjoy this happiness; our sight, our hearing, our touch, each will receive the gratification due to it. In heaven we will meet and dwell with Mary and the saints. How eagerly will our Mother greet us; how the saints will vie with each other in loving us! And this is to continue, not for a thousand years, not for a million, but for ever, as long as God is God.

2. What are the torments of hell, the prison where the lost souls are detained? They are many and are beyond description. The sensible pain which is caused by fire in this world is indeed very great, and men have such a fear of it that they do all they can to avoid it. There is no mode of death considered so painful as that of being burnt alive, especially when this is done slowly. But if the fires even of this world cause pain so great that it is intolerable, what pain must the damned endure amidst the scorching flames of hell? Holy writers tell us that the violence and heat of hell-fire surpasses that of any fire on earth. And the soul has its own special torments. The regret that it suffers for its universal loss of heaven and every happiness is indeed a hell in itself. It has no power to

change its state ; it has no power to put aside its tortures ; there is no cessation of pain ; it must suffer and endure the horrors of hell for ever and ever.

3. Here, brethren, in brief words, is the description of the two states which exist in the next world : the one a state of transcendent happiness, the other a state of indescribable, fearful, and agonizing torments. Which of these two will be ours in the next life ; shall we be called to the joys of heaven, or cast amidst the horrors of hell ? This is a question which we ourselves can answer. It is certain that, unless we attend with all zeal and diligence to the affairs of our soul, unless we work hard and perseveringly against the devil, the world, and the flesh, we will in the end be lost and sent to hell. This is a terrible thing, brethren, a thought which should fill us with great fear. Let us realize it fully, grasp it as clearly as possible, and let it sink deep into our souls. We see that we may be lost, that most probably we shall be cast into hell, unless we awake from our spiritual sleep, and labor with all our powers to hinder this from happening.

II. 1. But what sane man, brethren, is there who will be careless, or will neglect his holy religion, when he fully realizes this danger ? No ; he will make up his mind and be determined that no matter what happens he will save his immortal soul. This determination must be a firm and lasting purpose, which will enter into our hearts, and remaining there, will ever spur us on, and taking hold of our daily lives, will enter into and guide all our thoughts, words, and deeds toward that one great object of our existence, the sanctification and salvation of our souls.

2. A great and learned theologian was once asked by his sister to write her a short book teaching her how to save her soul. This he did, and sent it to her, and when she opened it, she found it was indeed very short, for it contained only two words, and they were these : "Will it." Now many might think this strange, and would have expected something greater from a learned and holy man. But if we look at them a moment, we must notice that he is speaking of that power of free will which man has, and by which he rules his own life and actions. "Will it," therefore, means, "Have a firm, fixed, and immovable will, and you shall save your soul." Alas, many of us have very fickle and vacillating wills. We profess we wish to save our souls, yet when the tempter comes we resist for a while, and then yield. We then complain and say we could not help sinning. The temptation was so strong, the circumstances in which

we were tempted were very difficult to overcome, and others were to blame. All these excuses and many others the sinner makes, but he forgets one point which is at the root of the whole matter. He had the power of choosing whether he would consent or not; and it matters not what arguments he uses, or what excuses he makes, he has free will, the power of saying "Yes" or "No" to the devil's suggestion. Nothing can destroy this fact, and the sinner need blame no one but his own fickle will. It was just this kind of will that the theologian warned his sister not to have. If she wished to save her soul her will was not to be fickle and changeable, but firm, determined, unchangeable. Now we sometimes meet with people who tell us that they have made up their minds to do certain things. But either because the things are wrong or dangerous we advise them to desist; yet no matter how we argue, no matter what we say, we can not overcome them, we can not move them. They have determined to do these things and we can not stop them. We call such people stubborn; we call them determined people. Well, this should just be the state of our will. We should make up our minds, and be determined that no matter what the devil, the world, or the flesh may say, we will, with God's help, save our souls. We must be absolutely stubborn in this matter; so stubborn indeed that no argument or inducement of Satan will cause us to yield or consent to anything he and his allies put before us.

III. 1. But however firmly our will may be fixed, however strong our determination may be, yet we must not trust to ourselves, for this would be presumption, but we must put our entire trust in God. In other words we must be men and women of fervent, continual prayer. We know well that we have three most powerful enemies to contend with, and each of these enemies has great power and skill, and, therefore, common sense forces us to the conclusion that if we stand alone we are lost. To save our souls, then, prayer is an absolute necessity. We may pray with our minds, or we may pray with our lips, we may pray in the privacy of our homes in secret, or with the congregation in the church in public, but pray we must; for God has made it a condition of our salvation that we ask His grace in prayer. By our natural powers alone we can do nothing conducive to our salvation. We need God's grace. This grace is a free gift which He can give as He pleases, and He has made a rule that only those who ask properly for it shall receive it.

2. We may be absolutely certain that when prayer is offered with the proper dispositions it will always be heard. We have the promises of Christ proving this. "Ask and you shall receive," says our Lord. And again, "Every one that asketh receiveth" (Matt. vii. 8). What more assurance than this can we possibly have, that if we pray rightly and with the proper dispositions, we shall receive the graces we ask? But when we pray, do we not mumble our prayers? Do we not say them with distractions? Are we not slothful and irreverent during the time of prayer? And can we expect such prayers to be answered? Certainly not, for such a way of praying is but an insult to God. We ask, but we ask amiss, and our prayers are not heard. Our prayers, then, must be said with humility and docility; and our mind must be so fixed upon God as to exclude all voluntary distractions. The prayer of the mind is the best kind of prayer, and when we pray with our lips our mind and heart must pray also. Upon these conditions we shall be heard.

3. But when must we pray? At all times. Our Lord taught that we "ought always to pray" (Luke xviii. 1); and St. Paul says: "Pray without ceasing" (I. Thes. v. 17). But if prayer be necessary at any time, how much more is it necessary in moments of temptation! Then we must have recourse to fervent prayer, and we must pray as long as the temptation lasts. God, who loves us so much, is most desirous that we should save our souls, and can we therefore think that He will refuse to help us in the moment of peril? No, a thousand times no. This is just the very reason why so many fall into sin; they do not pray; they trust to themselves during temptation, and fall miserably. When we hear sinners state that they can not overcome temptations, we may be confident they do not pray when the tempter is present, but attempt to argue with him, and he overcomes them.

IV. 1. There is another source of grace open to us, and it will help us greatly in sanctifying our souls, and that is the frequentation of the Holy Sacraments. The Church most distinctly teaches that the Sacraments were instituted to convey grace to men's souls. The Sacrament of Penance, as we know, restores us to the favor and friendship of God. Now when this happens, what abundant streams of grace are ever ready to be poured into our souls. We then have only to ask for them with proper dispositions in order to obtain them. The man in mortal sin who stays away from confession is hindering these graces from entering his soul, and little wonder,

then, if he is weak and unable to resist temptation. And besides the Sacrament itself, look at the fervent preparation for it; the acts of sorrow, of humility, of faith, do not these bring grace? But we must also take into account here the fact that once a sin is mentioned in confession, then, if the penitent is in earnest, every possible effort is made to drive sin out of the soul. For the priest advises the penitent what to do, and if the advice is taken, he will not commit that sin again. If the sinner keeps his "purpose of amendment he will sin no more."

2. The Most Holy Eucharist is another great source of grace open to us. When we receive Holy Communion worthily, we receive our Lord Himself, who is the fountain of all grace. "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed," says our Saviour to us, and as meat and drink fortify, nourish, and strengthen the body of man, so this divine Food nourishes, fortifies, and strengthens his soul (Cf. John vi. 56). See, then, how the frequent reception of these two Holy Sacraments pours grace into the soul and strengthens it. What a great and a wonderful aid, then, they offer us to resist temptation and save our souls.

V. 1. Another thing which will greatly help us to save our souls is to avoid the occasions of sin. We know well what special kind of sins we have been guilty of in the past, and where, when, and with whom we committed them. Now we are still weak; we are still in great danger of sinning; and, therefore, if we rush headlong into danger, into temptation, we are sure to fall again. He that loveth the danger will perish in it. The same people are there, the same conditions still exist, and if we do not avoid going to these places where we will meet these people and these conditions, we shall be sure to sin again.

2. Our Lord gives us a most emphatic warning on this point. "If thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into eternal life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into unquenchable fire" (Mark ix. 42). The word "scandalize" here means to put a thing in the way to cause any one to stumble or fall, and hence Christ means that we must remove from ourselves every possible stumbling block which may cause us to fall, even were it as precious to us as our hand. At every cost, no matter how painful it may be, we are obliged to avoid all persons, places, and things which may have been in the past an occasion of sin, or which we know may prove to be such in the future.

Brethren, we now see the steps we must take to carry out the will of God in our regard, to sanctify and save our souls, and hereafter reign with our Father in heaven. We must indeed make use of them; we must save our souls. And now the holy season of Lent will soon be over, and what use have you made of it? What benefit have you derived from it? The very end for which you were made has been set before you, and you have seen the value of your soul to you, and the folly of living an earthly, sensual life. The wiles and deceits of your spiritual enemies have been pointed out to you, together with the vices they wish to implant in your souls. All this has been set before you, and also the manner in which you must oppose them, with the virtues which you must cultivate in order to do your duty toward God and man. What is the result to be, brethren? What benefit will you derive from all this? Ah, that depends entirely upon yourselves. The importance of saving your soul is clear to you; the fearful sorrow which will be yours if you lose it are also evident. By your actions now you can gain the life of bliss in heaven, or allow yourselves to fall into the torments of hell. The practical point, then, is which are you going to choose? Surely, brethren, you as sane men and women will choose eternal life with God. Ah! go, then, and prepare earnestly, for a good, sincere confession and the reception of the Most Holy Eucharist; and for the rest carry out faithfully the advice that has been given you during this holy time; and beginning a new life ever work for the sanctification of your souls. May heaven grant you this great and wonderful grace, and enable you to reach that home of delights in which your heavenly Father awaits you.

VII.—GOD'S WONDROUS LOVE FOR OUR IMMORTAL SOULS.

(SERMON FOR GOOD FRIDAY.)

"Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God and in three days dost rebuild it; save thy own self; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."
—Matt. xxvii. 40.

SYNOPSIS.—Introduction.—The scene on Calvary.

I. The corporal sufferings of Christ, caused by: 1. Being derided and buffeted in the house of Caiphas. 2. The scourging at the pillar. 3. Being crowned with thorns. 4. The Crucifixion on Calvary.

II. The mental sufferings of Christ, caused by: 1. The agony in the garden. 2. Being betrayed by Judas. 3. His bitter humiliation. 4. Being derided and contemned. 5. His utter desolation.

Conclusion.—Hildebrand and his enemy. Keep the resolutions made during Lent.

Whence, beloved brethren, come these bitter, cruel words? To whom are they addressed? On what occasion were they uttered? Ah, go back in spirit to that first Good Friday, more than nineteen hundred years ago, and on Calvary's heights gaze upon the terrible scene of man's redemption, and, then, unless your hearts are made of stone, they will indeed be moved to their very depths. There, suspended between heaven and earth, Christ, the God-man, hangs dying on the gibbet of the cross. As we gaze upon the countless wounds that cover His sacred body, we fully realize that terrible and without a parallel are His sufferings. Surely the wrath of hell is spent; surely it has now no power to harm Him more. Ah, we are quite mistaken! Listen to that mocking crowd beneath Him. Now that He is in their power, now when His body is one great mass of wounds, these men still continue to mock Him, to jeer at and revile Him. Oh, how their cruel words pierce His very soul. What has He done to deserve this? What harm has He done to any of those in this seething crowd? None whatever. His hands have never been raised but to bless them; His feet have but carried Him in search of them; His holy lips have ever spoken words of wisdom, love, and peace to them. He has given sight to their blind, hearing to their deaf, strength to their lame and afflicted, life to their dead. He has ever been to them the kindest of friends, the greatest

of benefactors; and they themselves have said: "He hath done all things well" (Mark vii. 37). Yet there He hangs in the greatest agony, and they stare at Him with eyes full of malice and hatred, and from their evil throats goes up that cruel, awful cry: "Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it; save thy own self; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matt. xxvii. 40). What a sea of pain fills Christ's soul when He hears this, what new anguish it adds to that which He already suffers! Terrible, indeed, are Christ's bodily torments; but those of His soul are greater still. With reverent, sorrowing, and loving hearts let us study both, and thus learn how boundless is His love for us.

I. 1. As to the corporal sufferings of Christ, we have but to look, brethren, at His body to see that it is but one great wound. From head to foot we find countless wounds, each speaking of His infinite love for man, and there seems not one sound spot on which to inflict another. When Judas has betrayed our Lord, Christ is taken and dragged to the court of the High Priest Caiphaz and the council of the chief priests, scribes, and elders. They question Him about His doctrines, and He answers in the mildest and most reasonable manner, and refers them to those who have heard Him. But they are not satisfied; they thirst for His blood; they procure false witnesses, but the testimony of these wretched men does not agree (Mark xiv. 59). Then the high priest distinctly asks our Lord if He is the Christ (Matt. xxvi. 63), and our Lord answers: "I am" (Mark xiv. 62). Then, in pretended indignation, Caiphaz rends his garments, and he and the whole council pronounce our Lord guilty of blasphemy, and worthy of death. The servants of the council now seize our Lord and heap upon Him every species of insult that malice can suggest. They blindfold Him, they strike Him, they even spit in His sacred face (Mark xiv. 65). How these blows must have bruised and hurt His holy flesh; but "when he suffered he threatened not" (I. Peter ii. 23). The unjust council, with Caiphaz at its head, is but a picture of those Catholics who do all they can to injure their neighbors, and even make evil out of the truth.

2. Throughout a great part of the night our Lord suffers at the hands of the servants, and in the morning the council again assembles, and in order to have Him put to death, they drag Him with great cruelty to the residence of Pilate, the Roman governor. Study the picture! Standing in the centre of the crowd is the innocent Lamb

of God, His countenance portraying infinite love and patience. His accusers look upon Him with hatred; the malice of their hearts glares out of their eyes; their cries are loud and harsh, their gestures violent. Pilate is used to trying malefactors; experience has taught him to know them; and he sees at once that Christ is not a criminal. He does not intend to try our Lord, but the priests and elders cry out: "We have found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cesar, and saying that he is Christ the King" (Luke xxiii. 2). Cunningly they have changed their accusation against our Lord. They knew that Pilate, who was a heathen, would not listen to their charge of blasphemy, for he did not care about blasphemy against a God in whose existence he did not believe. The falseness of the new charges against Christ is very evident. Continually He taught obedience and submission to superiors (Matt. xxii. 21); He paid the tax for Himself and Peter; and the Kingship of which He spoke was "not of this world" (John xviii. 36). Pilate then questions our Lord, and returns to the chief priest saying: "I find no cause in this man" (Luke xxiii. 4). Then, hearing that Christ is a Galilean, Pilate sends Him to Herod, who ruled over that part. But Herod sets Christ at naught, and when he and his soldiers have tormented our Lord, he sends Him back to Pilate. The governor now distinctly declares that Christ is innocent of crime, that both he and Herod have judged so. "I will chastise him therefore and release him," says Pilate (Luke xxiii. 16). It is evident that Pilate wishes to release our Lord, and now, on the festival day, he was accustomed to release a prisoner to the people. He had now a notorious criminal named Barabbas, and Pilate thought they would surely prefer Christ to Barabbas. But when he speaks to them, they ask for Barabbas. Pilate again asserts Christ's innocence, again says he will chastise Him and let Him go. But the Jews grow furious and cry out: "Crucify him, crucify him" (Luke xxiii. 21). They even threaten the governor: "If thou release this man, thou art not Cesar's friend" (John xix. 12). Behold here two types of character—the strong, stubborn, determined chief priests and elders, and the weak, vacillating Pilate. They hate Christ and persist in His condemnation, and the governor, afraid to lose his position and Cesar's friendship, yields to their demands (Cf. Mark xv. 4). Let us be as stubborn and determined as the Jews when the devil tempts us.

Pilate now orders our Lord to be severely scourged, and delivers

Him to the soldiers for that purpose. We gather from St. Luke (xxiii. 16) that he hoped this would satisfy the Jews. The scourges used by the Romans were whips with several lashes, and were made with cords of hard leather, and were loaded at the ends with pieces of metal or small bones. They mangled the flesh; they sometimes caused death. Look, now the whips are ready, and the soldiers seize Christ, strip Him, and tie His hands to a pillar. The scourges swish through the air; the terrible flagellation begins. No restriction has been placed upon the soldiers, and they observe no limits. The law commanded moderation in scourging, but these brutal executioners heed it not. Soon the sacred flesh of Christ is red and swollen. His blood begins to flow. The soldiers act like savages; hatred gives them greater strength; each furious blow inflicts a wound and tears and mangles Christ's body. His blood flows freely, bespatters those that stand around; portions of His flesh, torn away by the whips, fall from them on the ground. His body is now one great wound, a fearful sight to behold. His bones are laid bare and may be counted, for the scourges have opened every part of His sacred flesh, have torn much of it away. When He is loosed from the pillar, He falls heavily into a pool of His own blood. Draw near and look intently at our suffering Lord. Why has He allowed Himself to be scourged so severely, to be treated in this inhuman and barbarous manner? It is because men and women seem to lose their reason and sink into the mire of sensuality and impurity. It is seen in their actions; it mingles with their speech; it is continually in their thoughts. How degrading, how lowering, how senseless such conduct. Because we gratify the desires of our flesh, Christ's holy flesh must suffer; and the severity of the scourging shows how utterly God detests this sin. Pause, sensual man and woman, give up your sins, or, as St. Paul says, you shall not "possess the kingdom of God," shall not enter heaven (I. Cor. vi. 9).

3. One would think that these soldiers would now cease tormenting Christ. But no, they seize Him again, drag Him into the hall, put a scarlet cloak about Him, and call all their companions together. They plait a crown of sharp thorns; they put it upon His head. They put a reed into His hand, and one by one the soldiers kneel in mockery, and, saluting Him, spit upon Him, and, taking the reed, strike His head (Matt. xxvii. 24-30). Merciful heaven, how terrible must have been the sufferings Christ endured, as the thorns were driven deeper into His head till they pierced His very brain. Ah, how we

should regret, and put away forever, those uncharitable, unjust, and impure thoughts of ours, on account of which this terrible torture was inflicted on our loving Saviour.

4. Pilate now brings forth Christ, hoping that the very sight of Him will move the hearts of the Jews with pity. "Ecce Homo:" ("Behold the Man"); and Christ stands before the Jewish rabble in a most pitiable condition, wearing the "crown of thorns and the purple garment" (John xix. 5). "Behold the Man," says Pilate. He has been scourged and mocked; He is arrayed in a purple robe as if He were a King; He bears upon His head not a crown of gold, but a crown of thorns. You said He had made Himself a King; He has been treated as a mock King. These, indeed, must have been Pilate's thoughts. He thought the Jews would let Christ go. But they cry out in fury: "Crucify him, crucify him," and Pilate passes sentence on Christ, and hands Him over to the Jews and the Roman soldiers to be crucified (John xix. 16). The cross is placed upon our Lord's shoulders and He begins the weary journey to Calvary. Three times He falls beneath His heavy burden and is brutally dragged up again. Fearing He will die on the way, they force Simon the Cyrenean to help our Lord. At length, the place of execution is reached, and Christ is roughly stripped of His garments, which now adhere to His torn flesh. They throw Him upon the cross, nail His hands and feet to it, and then raise it aloft bearing its sacred burden. They drag the foot of the cross till it reaches the hole dug to receive it, and then let it fall into the hole with a jolt. Oh, heaven! What fearful pain this must have caused Jesus. The sudden jolt causes the wounds in His hands and feet to be terribly torn, and this must have caused Him excruciating pain. Ah, draw near and see what new sufferings the crucifixion inflicts upon Christ. His head is in pain, yet the thorns prevent it from resting, for every position drives them deeper in. His arms, which are raised and stretched out in an unnatural position, give Him incessant pain. The nails are driven through those parts of His hands and feet which are full of nerves and tendons, and cause Him exquisite anguish. Every movement, even the slightest, causes Him some fresh agony, some new pain. Ah, brethren, see to what a pass our wretched sins have reduced our loving Lord! Surely this will move our stony hearts and cause us to abandon sin and do penance for our past crimes. Can the love shown in the bodily sufferings of our Lord, which He bore for our sakes to save us from the torments of hell, fail to win our hearts? Surely

not, for love begets love, and from this moment we will begin to love and serve Him.

II. 1. But severe as the corporal sufferings of Christ are, they are not nearly so great as the afflictions of His soul. "A man," say the Holy Scriptures, "will choose any plague but the plague of the heart" (Ecclus. xxv. 18). We see here, what we learn by experience, that the pains of the body are less afflicting than those of the soul. Behold this proved by the terrible agony of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemani. Suddenly, like a flash of lightning, the thunderbolts of heaven fall upon Him, and the anger of His Father, pent up for thousands of years, bursts upon Him. The innocent Lamb of God stands clothed with the wretched sins of the whole human race. Sins of pride, anger, lust, gluttony; sins of drunkenness, injustice, scandal, and murder; all the sins that have ever been committed or ever will be, now cover and envelop our Lord like a great cloud of iniquity. Now He allows His human soul to have one clear, vivid, and comprehensive view of all that He must endure. The blows wound His flesh, the scourges tear it, the thorns pierce His head, not successively nor in turn, but all now seem to strike at once. In that one moment all His passion came upon Him. Little wonder, then, His "soul is sorrowful even unto death" (Matt. xxvi. 38). He kneels, "falls prostrate on the earth," and prays to His Father that "the hour might pass from him" (Mark xiv. 35). Rising, He goes a little distance to seek consolation from His apostles, but they are asleep (Verse 37). A second time He prays, yea, even a third time: "Father, if thou wilt remove this chalice from me; but yet, not my will but thine be done" (Luke xxii. 42). See how He obeys His Father's wishes. Then an angel descends from heaven to strengthen Him (Verse 43); "and his sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground" (Verse 44). Terrible was the agony of His soul when pain forced His very blood through the pores of His sacred body in such a quantity that it soaked His garments and fell in drops upon the ground. No external violence produced this, for no one was near Him, and the night air was cold, and He in His great sorrow was prostrate on the cold earth. Ah, heaven, it was your sins and mine, brethren, that caused this terrible sweat. Christ saw our sins, not in a general way, but individually. He saw your sins and mine, and each of these sins apart from the others. Ah, let us learn to pray as He did, especially in trials, and when temptation comes, so that we may sin no more.

2. What keen anguish Jesus suffered when Judas betrayed Him. If one of the people who had received a benefit from Christ had done this, it would have been terrible enough. But to think that Judas, one of the twelve, His friend, His companion, His apostle, should do this, was indeed far more terrible and more painful to the heart of Jesus. And for what does he betray Christ? Does he gain a throne or a kingdom? No; the chief priests appoint him "thirty pieces of silver" (Matt. xxvi. 15). Merciful heaven, to sell his Master for such a trifle! After the Last Supper he approaches his Master in the garden and he kisses Him. Great and merciful Father in heaven, Thy Son is betrayed by the very sign of, the very token of, love. What pain must have filled the Sacred Heart of Jesus as He thought of this low, base, and most fearful act. To be betrayed by even a stranger is pain enough, but how fearful to be sold to the enemy by a friend, a dear companion—it was most inhuman. Judas loved money, brethren; he yearned for it; it was his god, and for it he sold his Master. We, too, very often love gold. We neglect our religious duties for it; we are unjust, we cheat, we even steal to gain it. And how often do we betray Jesus, how often do we prefer, not thirty pieces of silver, but some vile sin, some carnal, fleeting gratification, to the will of God. Over and over again we, by our sins, crucify Him and make a mockery of Him. Let us, then, when we condemn the act of Judas, condemn our own conduct also.

3. Painful was it for our Lord to hear the murderer Barabbas preferred before Himself; still it was more humiliating to be condemned to the servile punishment of the whip or scourge; yet exceeding all this was the torment of His soul when He suffered the infamous, degrading, and opprobrious death of a malefactor, the death of the cross. There He hangs between two thieves, accounted and held to be worse than a thief. He has been mocked, blindfolded, buffeted, spit upon, scourged and crowned with thorns; but all His sufferings culminate in the death of the cross. How painful it must be for the King of kings to be so humiliated and degraded; how it must have tortured His holy soul. Yes, brethren, and we helped to bring this humiliation upon our Lord by our crimes. How very often do we prefer our evil companions to the company and graces of Christ; and do we not then do our utmost to exhibit our pride, and make people think we are something, whereas we are nothing. It was these sins of men that brought this suffering on Jesus.

4. But Christ has to suffer still greater sorrow. He is not only

treated with humiliation, but also with contempt. In the midst of His sufferings, in the very depths of His tortures, His enemies have no compassion for Him, no pity upon Him. A hellish crowd, with the rulers and priests among them, stand at the foot of the cross and look upon Him as though He were the vilest being that ever earth or heaven beheld. They wag their heads, they rail at Him, they scoff at, revile, and mock Him, and shout aloud: "Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it: save thy own self; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matt. xxvii. 40). There is no one who is insulted in his misery that does not feel the insult more than the misery itself. How each insult, then, of that scoffing crowd must have pierced our Lord's soul. And yet how foolish were these men. Had Christ come down from the cross, man would not have been redeemed, but still be under the ban of perdition. Brethren, we were not personally in that crowd, we did not insult Christ by our cries, yet we have done worse than this. How often have we refused to hear His voice when He asked us to give up sin. How frequently have we committed mortal sin, and again and again crucified the Son of God and made a mockery of Him (Heb. vi. 6).

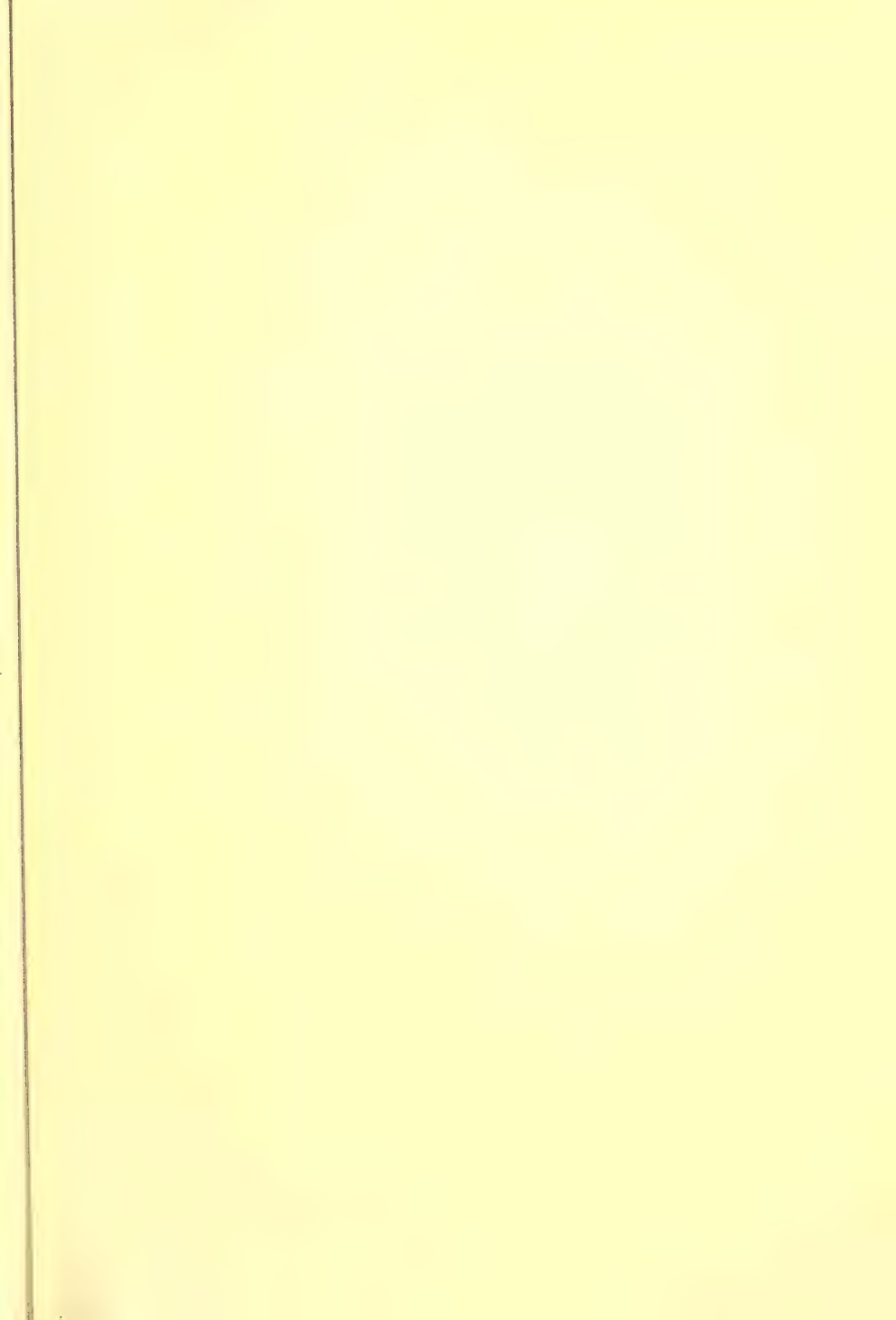
5. But what must we say of Christ's utter desolation? In all His sufferings there is no one to help Him, no one to comfort Him. Judas has betrayed Him; Peter has denied Him; and the rest of His disciples have fled and forsaken Him. Earth seems determined to torment Him all it can. Surely, then, He will receive consolation from above. But no, heaven also seems to have deserted Him, and the consolation which the Father could have given is withheld. Oh! beloved brethren, language can not describe the agony of Christ's soul on this account. It pierces His heart through and through, till it forces Him to cry out in a loud voice: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46). In all our sufferings there is at least some consolation in the thought that some one grieves for us, that some one will come and take our heavy burden from us. But our loving Lord was bereft of all help; even His blessed Mother could not relieve Him of His sufferings; she could but suffer with Him. He must drink the bitter chalice of affliction to its very dregs. If His corporal sufferings, then, were terrible, still greater were the unspeakable and unparalleled afflictions of His soul. Never, indeed, was there sorrow like to His sorrow. Wonder not, then, that the earth quaked, that the rocks were rent, and the veil of the

temple split in two. Be not surprised that the dead rose from their graves; for both they and nature seem to protest against the most cruel and barbarous manner in which their Lord and Creator has been put to death. (Cf. Matt. xxvii. 51-53.) Shall our hearts alone remain obdurate and hardened? No, indeed; full of sorrow for our many sins, let us cast ourselves at the feet of our crucified Lord, ask His pardon, and be determined from this very moment, never again to sin, never again to offend Him.

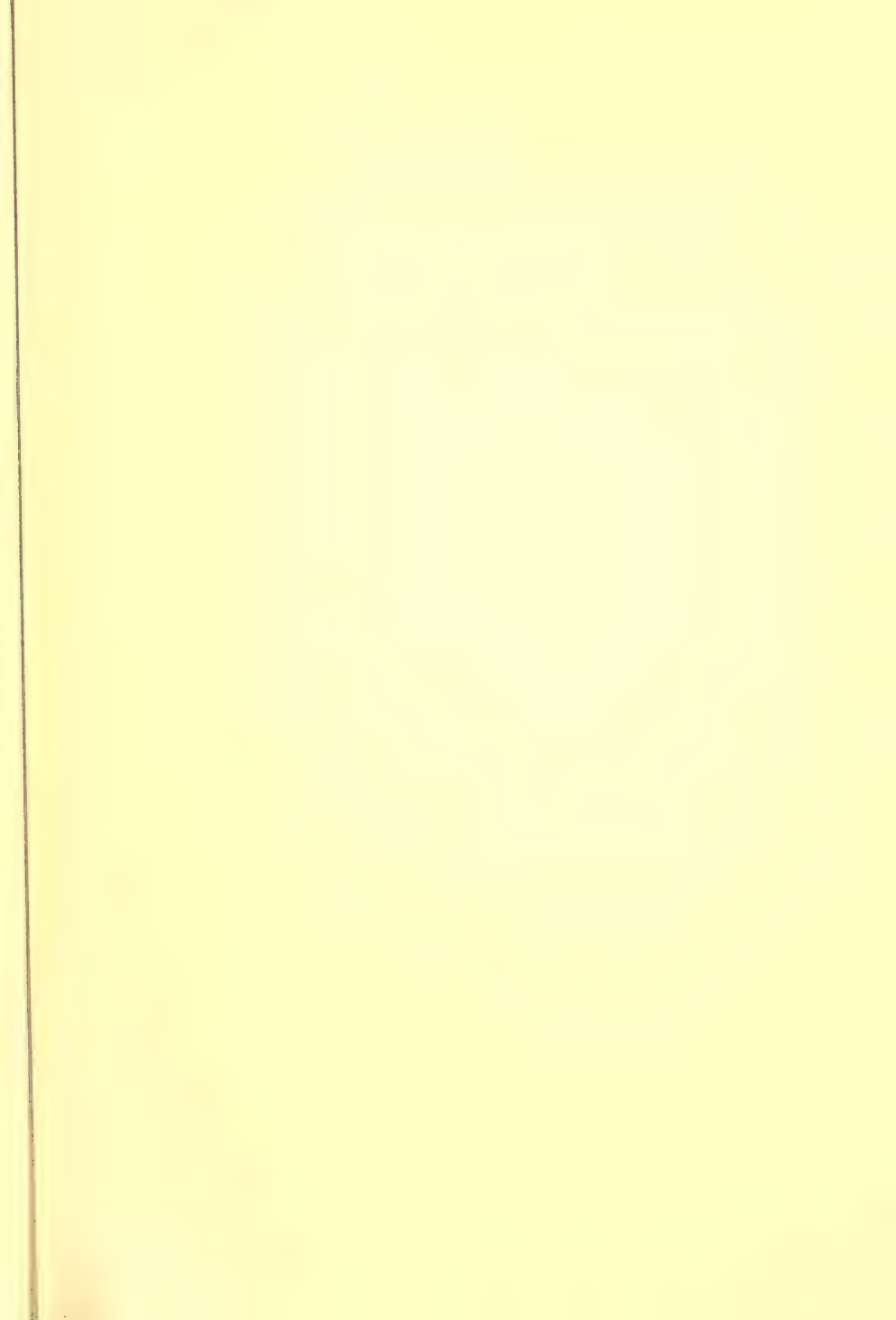
Long ago, brethren, a knight named Hildebrand received a great insult from a nobleman, and as he felt it most keenly and desired revenge, a duel was therefore arranged. When the day for the fight came, Hildebrand rose early, prepared his weapons, and started for the place of meeting. He had to pass a chapel on his way to the spot, and as it was too soon for the combat, he entered and began to walk round the chapel and look at the pictures on the walls. The first picture he noticed was the scourging at the pillar, and under it was written: "When He suffered, He threatened not." The second picture showed our Lord in fool's garments, and had the words: "He rendereth not evil for evil." The third picture Hildebrand saw was that of the crucifixion, with the prayer: "Father, forgive them." These holy pictures spoke to Hildebrand's heart; he knelt and prayed for himself and his enemy. The hour for the combat arrived, and Hildebrand rose from his knees to go and meet his enemy. What was his surprise, when the nobleman came forward, held out his hand, and asked to be forgiven, saying: "Jesus forgave His enemies and prayed for them; let us do the same." Hildebrand most willingly consented, and from that day forward the two were great friends (Cat. in Ex.).

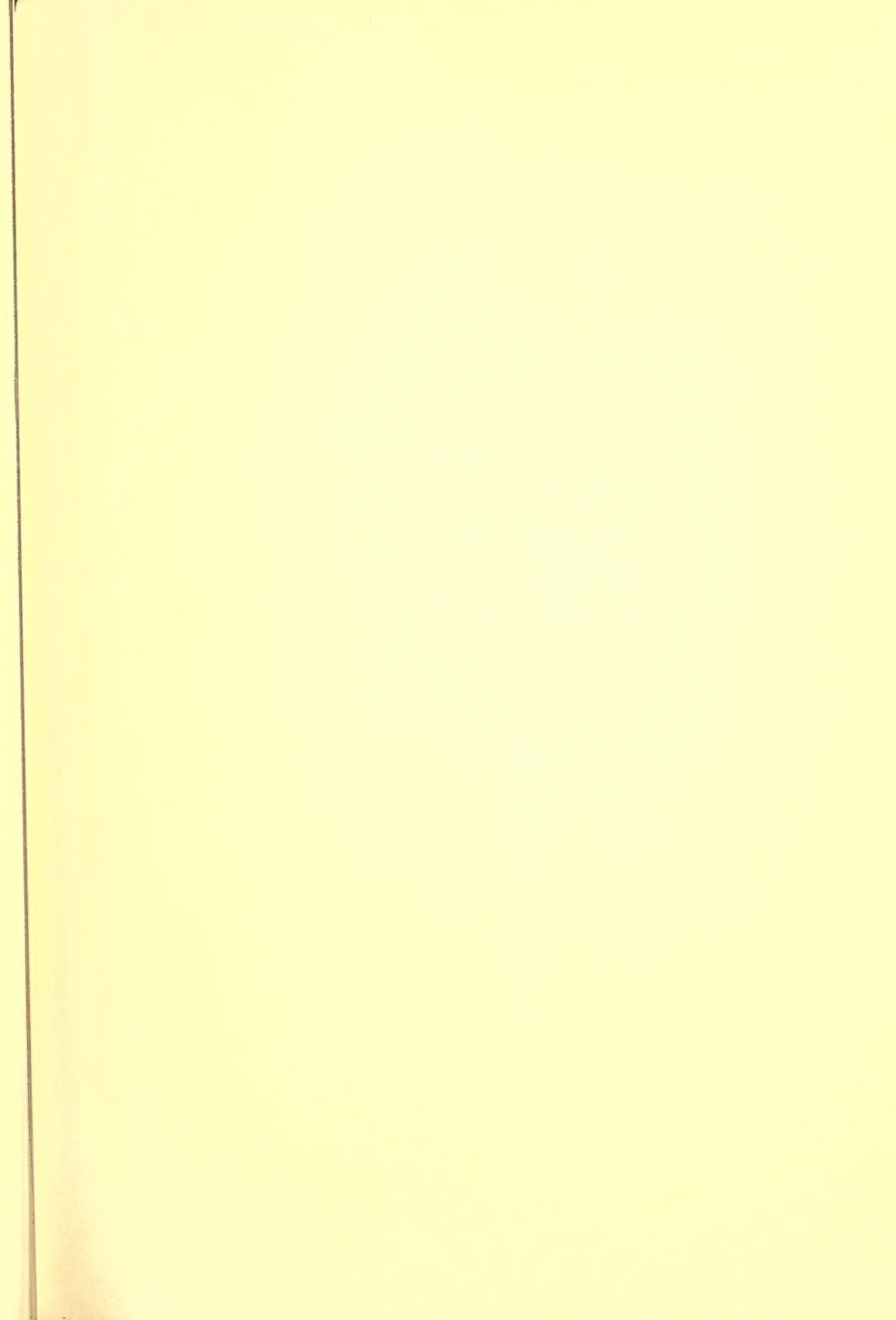
Brethren, let this example be a model for your constant imitation. Be ever careful in your daily intercourse with others to put into practice the many wonderful virtues which Jesus in His sacred passion exhibited toward us. Have a great love for your fellow creatures; bear with their failings, forgive them when they offend you; pray for them that persecute you. And, now, on this great and holy day, do your utmost to recall to your minds the many loving messages which God has sent you during Lent. Realize as fully as you possibly can how important it is to labor for the salvation of your immortal souls. Forget not that you have three most powerful enemies, who are ever trying to hinder you from doing this, and you know the vices they will try to implant in your souls. But,

listen not to the devil, the world, or the flesh; have nothing to do with pride, drink, sensuality, covetousness, anger, detraction, and such like vices. On the contrary, be humble, charitable, pure, sober men and women of prayer and determination. Thank your most loving Saviour for the great and wondrous love He has shown you in His sacred passion and death, when He suffered so terribly, both in His soul and body, to redeem and save you. Call to mind the good resolutions you have made during Lent, and be more determined than ever to keep them. Go, now, and make a good and earnest confession, and approach the holy table as soon as possible. Let this be your first step in a new and holy life. Have great courage; place yourself in the hands of God, and become men and women of fervent and continual prayer, and be sure that your loving Father in heaven will in every way help you. As Christ rises from the dead on Easter Sunday, so must you now rise from your life of sin, to one of holiness and grace. And be determined, brethren, firmly, and resolutely resolved, that come what may, you will never again, with the assistance of God's grace, yield to temptation, never commit another sin. Continue and persevere in this resolution, and when death comes, you will be comforted and understand Christ's words: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?"









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